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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



THE FORTUNE-TELLER OF THE RHINE.

CHAPTER XI.

THE young people were returning from an expedition to Dentz. As they crossed over its bridge of boats, Guy whispered archly to Irena:

"I never see the Rhine but I recall our first meeting."

"You were presumptuous," said Irena, blushing, for she knew to what he alluded: "had I dreamed we should ever meet again, I think I should have allowed the waves to overwhelm me ere I complied with your saucy request."

"How glad I am you could not read the future," answered Guy: "you were less fortunate than I. But a few hours before I had been warned of what was in store for me."

"What do you mean?"

"That Rhine woman—the fortune teller, had given us all the benefit of her wisdom."

"I remember Ralph's teasing you about it once, but I never heard an explanation."

"I shan't dare to give it to you now. She was a singular person; I have wondered a little that I have heard no more from her. Somehow she interested me extremely."

"What are you talking about?" asked Edith, pressing forward a little, to escape too lover-like a speech from Ralph.

"The Rhine fortune-teller; you have not forgotten her, Edie?"

It was Edith's turn to blush. How well she remembered the emphatic assertion as to whom the blue eyes should belong.

Almost unconsciously she sighed as she replied:

"No, Guy, I hardly think we shall any of us forget her; she is associated with the recollection of that unfortunate boat."

"Talk of his satanic majesty and you are sure to see his horns," exclaimed Ralph; "be pleased to look yonder."

[A FATHER'S CURSE ARRESTED.]

They all followed his guiding glance, and behold, on the shore, against a lamp-post, leaned the tall figure in the black cloak and scarlet hood.

She watched their approach calmly, and came forward at once with her usual stately composure.

"Will the fair ladies and noble gentlemen consult the sybil of the Rhine to-day? She has many important relations to communicate."

Our young people glanced furtively into each other's faces.

"Why not?" said Guy, eagerly.

"To be sure, it will be rare sport," echoed Ralph.

Irena stood with downcast eyes, and uttered not a word.

Edith perceiving it was left for her to decide, stammered, hastily:

"We shall attract attention. It will look so strange to see us stopping in the street."

"Come to the home of the sybil," said the fortune-teller, gravely; "it is but a short distance. Have no fear, fair ladies; you will always be thankful that you came, rest assured of that."

"Come, oh come!" whispered Ralph to Edith; "you are surely not afraid, when Guy and I are with you. It will be an adventure worth relating when we return to England, this visit to a Rhine fortune-teller's den."

"I am afraid of what she will say," returned Edith, in a whisper still lower than his own.

"She promises that you shall be thankful. Oh, Edith, it was a blessed hope she held before me; let us go, I implore of you."

Edith made no farther objection.

Guy had glanced inquiringly into Irena's face, but the motionless features and downcast eyes gave him no hint of her inclination.

"Will you go, Undine?" said he, at length.

"As the others choose, it does not matter to me."

"It matters very much to you, foolish child!" exclaimed the fortune-teller.

Guy turned to her indignantly.

"Methinks you might choose more respectful words to induce her."

"Does the lady complain?" asked the fortune-teller.

A furtive smile quivered around Irena's lips, but still she did not look up, though she replied, readily:

"Not at all, I have no doubt I shall be amused."

"Amused! I am sure you will be profited. I will lead the way—if you choose, young people, you can follow me."

She whirled around, and took a straight course, never once turning her head to see if they were following, nor to answer the frequent respectful salutations of the passers-by.

"How absurd it is!" exclaimed Edith, nervously, "don't you think so, Guy?"

"Not particularly absurd. Older and steadier people than we consult her every day, I have no doubt. You are not obliged to credit her assertions, you know, Edie."

"But I am afraid I shall."

They all laughed.

"But do you suppose she remembers that she has seen us before?" queried Ralph.

"I certainly do," answered Guy; "however, we shall know presently. See, she is pausing at her door." "Oh, Ralph, I am afraid to venture," cried Edith, clinging tremblingly to Ralph's arm.

"Nay, nay, dear one," whispered Ralph, "remember that she is to show me how I shall win my hope."

"You are not dismayed, Undine," said Guy to his companion, gazing admiringly upon her tranquil face.

"Not yet, certainly; the sybil has no terrors for me, I fancy. She will spend her eloquence upon her more noble subjects."

The dark figure stood in the open doorway pointing to the inner passage.

Guy, who had passed through once before, promptly led the way. Irena followed fearlessly, but Ralph was obliged to steady Edith with his encircling arm, ere she could cross the mysterious threshold.

The dim light of the room, its weird effect, and strange furnishing, gave Edith a new panic.

The fortune-teller looked from her to Irena's unruffled face with admiration, and it seemed to Guy with pride also.



"The blue-eyed maiden has little liking for the sybil's dark room. Does she not know that the darkness heralds morning? That her fears may be spared I will consult her oracle at once," said she, gravely, and she flung her mystic materials into the flame.

The same bubbling noise and rising vapour that Guy had witnessed before followed, but there was no visible picture upon the mirror.

The sybil, however, peered into it, and announced that it was ordained that two should leave the room before the maiden's fortune could appear.

As she spoke she motioned for Guy and Irena to retire through a door she flung open. They obeyed. Edith, pale as a white rose, sat motionless in her chair.

Ralph flung her a bright glance to reassure her, as he took a seat to which the fortune-teller motioned him, explaining that the other interfered with her line of vision to the mirror.

"There are but two important questions a fair maiden asks: for the hero of her destiny, and the inquiry if her life is to flow peacefully and happily.

Here are the branches of gorse. Let the maiden name them both, and fling the most favoured into this crucible. If it be the husband she is to love and honour, his image will appear upon the mirror. Remember that it is to be done truthfully—the truly favoured, not the one which ought to be or has been."

She passed the sprays into Edith's trembling fingers, and retreated to a dark niche amidst the curtains. The weird blue light flashed over the room as Edith flung into the bubbling receiver her ominous stalk of tiny blossoms.

The fortune-teller's hand moved lightly among the curtains and then she came slowly into the room. All the light there seemed gathering and glowing about the magic mirror.

Edith's eyes and Ralph's also were fascinated to it. And lo! as the brightness slowly spread over its surface, there was Ralph's face pictured upon it. It was lifelike and perfect.

Ralph uttered an exclamation of joy, while Edith, no longer the white rose but crimson as the reddest carnation, buried her face in her hands.

"Speak, maiden of the blue eyes, take courage and have no fear. Has the mirror told you false? Is it the likeness of him you named?"

Edith dared not answer with Ralph's eager eye upon her.

The fortune-teller came forward and bent down her ear.

"Whisper!" said she, authoritatively.

And Edith whispered, "Yes."

She smiled—that strange woman—in gleeful triumph, then went forward to the mirror.

"There is a tangled knot, but it will fall away at the lightest touch. The one you do not love will free you gladly. You will be happy with the man of your choice."

"Can I believe you?" asked Edith, tremulously.

"Can the magic mirror lie?" was the stern reply.

She motioned for Ralph to come forward.

"It is idle to read your fate here. What is spoken for the one will answer for the other. Be of cheerful hearts, for the day of your union approaches."

She opened the door through which Guy and Irena had retreated, and they came in at her call, while Ralph and Edith took their places in the ante-room.

"I hope she will do as well for you, old fellow, as for me," whispered Ralph, gleefully, into Guy's ear.

There was a more earnest look now upon the fortune-teller's face as she advanced towards this second couple.

"Children," said she, almost solemnly, "as you would have your future bright and gladsome, I charge you to be truthful in your dealings with me. Guy Mordaunt, has my first prediction come to pass? Has a dark eye won you from your allegiance to the blue?"

"I dare not deny that it has. I have struggled against it all in vain," answered Guy.

"But not so persistently since you have known that your betrothed had given her heart to another."

"I hoped it might be so, is it really true?" cried Guy, joyfully.

"She has confessed it, even here to-day. Your broken engagement will be a relief to each. Listen to me; if the one you really love could be won, would it be any impediment to know that she has a hopeless stain upon her birth—that she was without a legal claim to her father's name—that she was poor, and of obscure parentage even upon the mother's side."

As she spoke the words, she bent her piercing eyes fiercely upon his face, and checked his vehement reply by a warning gesture.

"Take time; be sure you tell me only the truth. Weigh your own convictions well. Remember, that you are to return with your bride to your proud English home. Can you bear the sneers that may

fall upon you there, for your portionless and nameless bride?"

Guy's eyes flashed indignantly.

"Only remove my uncongenial engagement, and give me my father's consent, and I will show you. The Rhine gave her to my arms, what care I for other parentage? as for her dowry, I need it not. Only say that there are no other obstacles, and I will bless you for ever."

Her breast heaved, her eye flashed—that strange woman—while she turned to the breathlessly attentive maiden.

"Irena, he is no nobleman; the title he expects belongs to another; I can prove it beyond a question; his father's estate goes too with the title; shame and disgrace will cover that father's name when a fatal word is spoken. I speak the truth, you know a lie never soiled my lips. His fair hopes in life are blasted at a breath, will you share such a fate?"

The girl caught her breath, and with her imperious eyes demanded from the woman's face the truth of the assertion. She saw that it was no imposture, and with a radiant smile turned to Guy.

"I should have hidden it always, but for this. Oh, Guy, it will be the fruition of my most blissful hope to become your wife. I will share you with the tenderness of my adoration from the anse of the world. You shall forget your blighted worldly prospects, because it shall be my fondest duty to beguile you from its remembrance."

The wondering Guy seized the outstretched hands, and as he did so the fortune-teller flung her arms around them both.

"Heaven bless you, my children, you deserve the joy that is in store for you."

"If I could trust the joyful assurance," said Guy, dubiously; "if it were not for my father's imperious will—his anxious determination to fulfil the engagement with Edith's father—"

"Leave Mordaunt to me," said the fortune-teller; "you shall see that he will welcome your union as a drowning wretch seizes a friendly plank, as the lost wanderer hails the home beacon. Go now, the fortune-teller has spoken!"

She left them abruptly.

Guy called to Ralph, and the four took their leave in silence, now and then casting an inquiring glance into each other's thoughtful faces as they slowly turned homeward.

CHAPTER XII.

SIR MORTON had not yet seen the lady of the house. While he remained weak and listless he resolutely put all thoughts of her away.

When, however, returning strength prompted the restless wish to escape from the monotony of his chamber, he began nervously to discuss the question.

He sent for Mrs. Owen at the very moment the young people were entering the house of the fortune-teller, and smilingly begged of her to talk to him, and beguile his weariness.

This request, as might be surmised, effectually closed her mouth. She sat silent, vexed with herself that she seemed so utterly destitute of entertaining topics of conversation.

Perceiving that he was not in the way to obtain his desired information, Sir Morton began to question her.

"Where are Guy and Edith, and Ralph too. Have they all left you? I am afraid you are neglected and are wretchedly dull. I think, my dear Hester, we shall appreciate Mordaunt Cliff if we ever return to it."

"I have no doubt of that. But indeed I am very pleasantly situated here. We were very fortunate in finding a house so comfortable and so much like an English one. And a hostess, too, able to speak our language. She is an extremely lovely woman, Madame D'Almanoff. I am much interested in her, and have found ample entertainment in her society."

"She is a widow, I suppose, as I have heard nothing of a husband."

"I judge so. She has not alluded to her personal affairs in any way."

"What sort of an appearance has she? You know I have not seen her yet, though Peter tells me she came to the chamber when I was at the worst."

"You saw the daughter, did you not? Madame D'Almanoff is very like her, only as Irena would be, after having passed through years of care and anxiety, and I imagine of strong suffering also. Yet Irena has a look I never see upon her mother's face; it puzzles me, it is so natural and familiar, though I can't trace it."

He turned his face away suddenly, and was a long time lost in silence.

Presently he said, slowly:

"D'Almanoff! I have heard the name before, here in Cologne. Possibly I may have met her in my young days; but then she would have spoken of it

She never has in any way suggested remembering our name, has she?"

"Oh, no," returned Mrs. Owen, promptly; "I fancy she has lived in strict retirement."

Sir Morton laughed lightly.

"And then, I have changed so. No one would think of recognizing me who saw me last in my prime. I've changed a good deal since then—oh, Hester?"

"Not more than other people, and your features are so peculiar they would still identify you."

He shifted his position uneasily, and again dropped into one of his deep reveries.

"The young people seem to bear our ill luck very cheerfully," observed Mrs. Owen, by way of breaking the uncomfortable silence.

He looked up quickly.

"Oh, yes! I've been thinking it over to-day. I wish they were married already. Do you think Edith would mind doing without the usual fuss and display? As I am her guardian as well as Guy's, I could have the affair over in a little time. Just the needful formalities and the presence of our consul, and the thing is done. It would be a great relief to me. Since our numberless mishaps I have an uncomfortable feeling all the time of other contingencies at hand. Yes, it seems to me it would make another man of me to see them safely married. What do you think about it, Hester?" asked he, with feverish eagerness.

"I am somewhat taken by surprise. As for the marriage, it has been so long looked forward to, it can make very little difference, I should imagine. As regards the gaiety incident thereto—which it is natural young people should enjoy—why the bridal festivities can take place just the same on their return."

"And you think Edith will consent?"

"I certainly do, especially when she knows how earnest you desire it."

"Then I'll have it over before another week," exclaimed he.

Mrs. Owen smiled at his eagerness.

"You will have to recruit your strength very rapidly to be a very cheerful wedding guest. Those pale cheeks will dampen our spirits."

"Never fear for me. You will see how I shall recover after the affair is off my mind. We will go back to England—from which such home-loving people never ought to have stirred, and the bride and bridegroom may act their own pleasure."

He rubbed his hands gleefully, and went tottering feebly up and down the room.

"I wish you'd speak to them when they come home; I own how childish I am, but the moment a thing is determined on I have no rest till it is accomplished. You'll speak to them, Hester?"

"Certainly, if you wish me to."

"And send Guy at once to me."

Mrs. Owen went away considerably amused at the new phase of affairs, and yet after all approving of the movement. Her old anxiety had been set at rest by the cheerful looks of all the party, and in the house they could not pair off, as they so naturally did, when they sauntered out upon their walks. Her chief anxiety had been for Ralph, for whom she had dreaded the horrors of unrequited affection; but since they had taken up their residence with the D'Almanoffs, she had, womanlike, planned a new romance wherein the beautiful and graceful Irena was to heal all the troubles of Ralph, and crown his life with happiness. She watched eagerly at the window for their approach, and marvelled a little at their prolonged absence.

She sat more than an hour waiting for them before either appeared. Then she saw Guy and Irena slowly turning up the avenue.

"It is an accident. That giddy Ralph has stopped Edie to tease her, as he dares not the more beloved Irena," murmured Mrs. Owen.

But when Ralph and his pretty companion came in sight, there was no sign of sportiveness in their serious faces. Edith was looking up in his eyes rather more trustfully than the occasion seemed to warrant, and his vehement gestures somehow alarmed his affectionate aunt.

She rose to greet them as they entered together, the four faces somehow lacking the usual careless look of cheerful glee.

"Well, children, you've loitered famously to-day," said Aunt Hester, tremulous with disagreeable suspicion that fairly appalled her. "I've been watching for you a long time."

"Anything particular you wanted of us?" asked Guy. "I trust my father is not ill again."

"Oh, no; he is unusually strong this morning, quite himself again. You will judge so, when I tell you he has been planning a wedding!"

Her voice faltered a little, and she looked anxiously from one startled face to another.

"A wedding—whose wedding?" demanded Guy.

"Why yours and Edie's, of course," answered

the worthy woman, her misgivings gaining stronger ground.

"Oh, Ralph!" exclaimed Edith, in a sharp tone of anguish, as she flew to Ralph's side.

The young man folded his arms around her, and gazed up into his aunt's face with defiant eyes.

"Edith, Ralph! what do you mean?" exclaimed Mrs. Owen.

Edith hid her face on Ralph's shoulder and began to weep.

"Guy, Guy," exclaimed the poor aunt, turning to him appealingly, "what will you think of Edith?"

"That the poor child is not in the least to blame, dear Aunt Hester; I am equally guilty."

"You, Guy! Heaven help me, have I lost my wits?"

Guy had turned with that wondrous thrilling smile of his, and gently drawn Irena's passive hand into his.

"Children, children, what have you been doing?" exclaimed Aunt Hester, frantically.

"Learning that the heart has stronger claims than the will of parents. Aunt Hester, Edie and I love each other very dearly as friends and relatives, but we are sure we shall be miserable if we are compelled to fulfil that old engagement. Are we not, Edith?"

"Yes, yes! oh, thank you, Guy, for speaking for me, for I cannot marry you, I will not marry you." Aunt Hester wrung her hands.

"Have I been so blind! oh, what will your father say to me? Go to your father, Guy, with this story. I am sure that I dare not."

Guy turned a little paler.

"I will go, but will it do to agitate him now? Is there no way by which I can postpone this discussion till he is stronger?"

"I am sure I cannot tell. He is resolute upon having the marriage take place at once. He has sent Peter twice to see if you had not returned. Oh, dear! well might he say he had premonitions of farther ills to happen."

Irena had not spoken.

Her face had flushed scarlet, and then grown intensely pale. She crossed now to Mrs. Owen's side and said, proudly:

"Mrs. Owen is angry with me. I do not deserve it. I have sought to avoid him until I knew that Edith had better love for another, and even then, Guy will tell you, I have been chary of a word of encouragement. I knew the obscure German girl would be haughtily rejected by the proud English Mordaunts."

"Nay, nay, my child! had it only been Ralph I should have heartily rejoiced. Perverse children! why could you not follow our wishes?"

"And why should not our friends sanction our heart elections?" exclaimed Ralph. "I have no title to be sure, but my fortune is ample for Edith's support in her usual luxury. Guy will not need a dowry with his bride. It is you who are perverse, not to rejoice in what would make us all so happy."

"It matters very little to me, Ralph, but I am afraid it will kill Sir Morton. I am afraid he will never yield, and he is Edith's guardian, you know."

Edith sobbed again.

"What a deplorable dilemma!" repeated Ralph, impatiently; "confound that fortune-teller, to predict such wonderful things just on the eve of our total discomfiture."

"The fortune-teller! ah, Undine, what was it she said? She is our only hope, I am sure. I have abundant faith in her. I would she were here," exclaimed Guy, pausing from his distracted walk up and down the room.

"I know how to bring her," whispered Irena, "shall I do it, Guy?"

"By all means. She promised to convert my father to our theory, if I remember rightly. We certainly need her help. Not that any threats or wrath shall compel me to leave my Undine, but that I fear my opposition will throw him back into that frightful state of mental rage which would lie heavily on my conscience all my life long."

"There is Peter coming again," exclaimed Mrs. Owen, in consternation; "Guy, you must really go to him, what will you do?"

Guy whispered earnestly to Irena.

"Send for the fortune-teller at once," and hurried up the stairs to meet Peter.

"Master is very anxious for you to come to his chamber, Mr. Guy. He feels rather nervous too, he's been so impatient about your coming."

Which Guy interpreted as a gentle hint for him to look out for a tolerably sharp reprimand.

His anticipations of the coming interview were certainly of no very agreeable nature as he unclosed his father's door, and walked into the room.

"Well, Guy, you don't say you're really come back at last. I can't conceive what you find to interest you so long in this wretched little town," was spoken querulously as the armchair was wheeled about, and

the worn, perturbed face of the invalid was turned towards him.

"We have been over to Dentz, and we lingered on the way home, I confess. How do you find yourself this afternoon, sir?"

"About the same. But I shall be better shortly. I shall start for England the moment I can bear a long ride. In the meantime, as I suppose Mrs. Owen has told you, I have decided to have the wedding take place here."

"You mean Edith's and mine," said Guy.

How hard and dry the words seemed as they passed his lips.

"Why, yes, it couldn't very well be another's."

And he laughed with a disuual attempt at facetiousness.

"I wish it could!" said poor Guy.

"I don't understand you!" was the dry response. Guy turned around after two or three desperate chokings in the throat.

"Dear father, I know you love me, I am sure you desire only my truest happiness—"

He could not go on for the dew which blinded his eyes, and the tremor which shook his voice.

"Of course I do, boy, what then?" was the sharp rejoinder.

"It would be a great favour to me if this subject were dropped for a month or so."

"A month or so! good heavens! the suspense would send me to my grave in that time! Guy, it is my turn to put the same question; if you love your father—if you would give him his only chance of peace and quiet, you will have your marriage take place as soon as possible."

"My marriage with Edith? Oh, father, that would be life-long misery for Edith, and for me, too."

"What do you mean?" fairly screamed Sir Morton, springing to his feet, and glaring fiercely upon his son.

"Edith does not love me, father, but her noble heart is given to Ralph."

"To Ralph—the dastardly villain! taking occasion to steal away an heiress during the illness of her guardian. But it will not avail him. She cannot marry without my consent. She must fulfil the old engagement."

"But she will be wretched."

"I cannot help it. Why, she was always willing, it is a foolish story. Send the girl to me."

"No, it is not foolish, father, it is too sorrowfully true. Edith is weeping downstairs now over the news of this intended marriage."

"Has Mrs. Owen cheated me too?" cried Sir Morton, fiercely.

"No, no, she was as astounded and grieved as you can be. It is very unfortunate, but we are none of us to blame. The heart has its own laws, my father, written in indisputable characters by the Creator's hand."

"But for me, what shall I do?" demanded Guy, sorrowfully.

"In the name of the furies, what will trouble you, Guy?"

"I do not love Edith, and I love someone else."

A wild oath foamed over Sir Morton's pale lips.

"Am I bewitched? what has changed you all? Oh, this accursed Cologne! I shall go mad if I remain here much longer. Whom do you love, I desire to ask?" he exclaimed, in a fierce, sneering tone.

Guy dared not add to his furious excitement by naming the obscure, portionless daughter of their landlady.

"It is a German lady I have met since you have been ill."

Sir Morton, with eyes gleaming like coals of fire, leaned forward and seized Guy's hand in his clammy fingers.

"Guy, if you do not marry Edith you are ruined. You have been brought up to luxury and great expectations. I tell you they may melt away at a moment's warning. With Edith's fortune you will be safe from poverty. You understand now, foolish boy, why I am so anxious. Go, torment me no more."

"You have given me an additional reason for refusing to fulfil the uncongenial engagement. Shall I marry her to obtain her fortune without giving even a heart in return? No, no! you are ill, and over-excited, or you would never ask it, my father."

"But I do ask it, and insist upon it, and your father's curse shall rest upon you, Guy, unless—"

"Hold!" said a sternly calm voice from the doorway.

Father and son turned simultaneously.

The Fortune-teller of the Rhine stood there, her black eyes gleaming brightly, her raven braids falling heavily from the weird, scarlet hood, her outstretched arm pointing into Sir Morton's quailing face.

"Revoke your curses, Morton Mordaunt, lest they

fall upon your own head," said the clear, ringing voice.

"Who are you? whence came you?" demanded Sir Morton, while Guy stood marvelling at the promptness with which the strange woman had responded to Irena's summons.

"I am the Sybil of the Rhine. She who foretold that the blue-eyed Edith should marry the man of her choice, Ralph Owen; who promised Guy Mordaunt that he should win for his bride the pure and noble maiden who has won his heart."

"You have wrought all this mischief, then; the furies seize you! But you shall see the lie given to your false prophecy. Guy shall marry Edith. In defiance of you all, I declare it."

"I have come to prove my words!" continued she, calmly. "Morton Mordaunt, you and I have met before."

"I know it," cried Sir Morton, fiercely, "upon that wretched steamer."

"We have met in the years far gone, here by the Rhine, as now, Morton Mordaunt."

He began to shiver, and convulsively seized Guy's hand.

The latter hastily wheeled forward the easy-chair, and Sir Morton sank into it.

"You came not alone to the Rhine shores. Ah! the grave—years and years gone—has closed over the form of your companion. He sleeps quietly, perchance, beneath your proud English tomb in his ancestral home, and perhaps his quiet spirit keeps unseen watch with us here this moment."

Her voice sank to a low, thrilling, horrified whisper.

The cold chills ran through Guy's frame—no wonder, then, Sir Morton leaned back with a face as ghastly as that of a corpse.

Guy made a beseeching motion for her to pause, but she gave him no heed.

The outstretched arm still pointed to the cowering, shaking figure in the arm-chair.

"Morton Mordaunt, who would not rather be the dead Guy than the dastardly usurper of his name and honour, living in honour and splendour though he may be?"

"Guy, Guy, turn her out, she is crazed, she speaks falsely, I will not hear her!" wildly shrieked Sir Morton.

"Hold!" cried the woman, sternly. "I have come to give your tortured soul peace. Answer me, Morton Mordaunt, in all these long years of prosperity, respected by your neighbours, beloved by your family, high in favour of all men, have you known happiness?"

"No, no!" moaned Sir Morton.

"Your guilty secret has eaten day and night at your tortured heart. I have known it—I have seen it. I exulted once, poor wretch! I only pity now. I have come to give you peace."

Her solemn voice carried conviction with it.

Guy stood like a statue, never moving his eyes from her face. His father, pressing both hands tightly against his breast, leaned forward breathlessly.

"It is impossible!" moaned he.

"Strange!" ejaculated she, "that the wily spirit continually at work to form new barriers against the final retribution should have overlooked the simple and only successful action which could palliate your sin! I repeat that there is one way in which you can find peace."

"Who are you?" exclaimed Sir Morton, once more rising passionately from his chair.

"My name was once Mercie Kerne," answered the woman.

Sir Morton dropped back as if he had been shot.

"I have a story to tell, but it must be heard by all interested. Sir Morton, as you hope for future peace, hinder me not."

She opened the door, and called, in a calm tone of authority:

"Hilda, summon all the English people hither, and come yourself with your daughter."

A low sob and unsteady step were heard without. In a few moments, with serious, anxious faces, they came forward; Edith was still weeping, but Irena was sternly composed, although marble pale.

The others seated themselves, but Irena, crossing to her mother's side, stood with one arm thrown protectively around her, while just before them loomed the tall, majestic figure of the fortune-teller.

The three formed a grand group. The stern, powerful figure of the mysterious sybil, with her strongly marked features and brilliant, piercing eyes, the graceful, ladylike, and still fine-looking mother in her Zenobia-like beauty, so majestically mournful, and the lovely, girlish daughter, her trustful, loving eyes fixed in tender solicitude upon Madame D'Almanoff's agitated face.

All eyes, even those of the trembling, cowering baronet, were fixed upon the two.

"I have a story to tell, and since there is not one

here but has a vital interest in it, I have summoned you all for listeners," began the sybil, "and because it is new to most of you I shall give it in detail, and in my own way."

(To be continued.)

MAUDE'S ORDEAL.

It was rather an embarrassing thing to do, but Charley May had done it well and bravely, like a man. He was nothing but a clerk at two hundred pounds a year, nevertheless, he had boldly craved audience of the portly old millionaire, and asked him for his daughter, as he might have asked for the milliner girl round the corner.

Mr. Bryant coolly wiped his pen and laid it in the carved bronzed rack; he moved back his chair a pace or two, looking Charley May full in the face as he did so, with a curious, mocking light in his cold blue eye.

"So you want to marry my daughter, eh?"

"I do, sir," said Charley.

Provokingly handsome he looked as he stood there, with the reddish brown hair thrown back from his square white forehead, the hazel eyes clear and confident, and the perfectly cut lips a little apart.

Somewhat, in the midst of his wrath and derision, old Richard Bryant could not help thinking that were he a girl of eighteen he might possibly have fallen in love with such a young man as Charley May.

"Is there any other little trifle I could let you have?" sneered the caustic old man. "A row of houses, or a lease or so, or any other small favour?"

"You are laughing at me, sir," said Charley, colouring, yet speaking with a certain quiet dignity. "I have asked you a simple question; surely I have the right to a frank answer."

"Then listen to me, young man," said Richard Bryant, with sudden, abrupt sternness. "You are aspiring altogether too high. You cannot have my daughter Maude. Now you have your answer—go!"

Charles May stood for a moment like one upon whom a thunderbolt has fallen with sudden blighting power, then he turned and walked quietly away.

The red glow of the November sunset could scarcely pierce the folds of ruby velvet that hung over the plate-glass windows, yet in the odorous twilight Mr. Bryant saw his daughter, with her face hidden in the satin sofa-pillows, and the heavy, bluish-black curls drooping low over the carved rosewood.

"Tell me, little daughter, what troubles you," whispered the merchant, bending fondly over the girl. Maude had never known a mother, and there was a tenderness in the old man's tones at that instant that was almost maternal.

She looked up, with the stain of fresh tears on her crimson cheek.

"He has gone, papa—he has gone and left me!"

"He? Who?"

"Charley May."

And Maude Bryant, who had spoken all her life long to her father as if he had been a loving mother also, hid her face on the kindly breast and cried afresh.

"I have been trying to convince her how very absurd all this is," said Aunt Eloise, a portly widow, in garnet silk and carbuncle jewellery.

"Maude," said Mr. Bryant, gravely, "do you mean to tell me that you actually care for that young snip of a clerk?"

Maude sat up indignantly, with lightning in her black eyes.

"Care for him, papa! I love him!"

"Very improper!" groaned Aunt Eloise.

"Aunt, I wish you'd say nothing!" sputtered Maude, growing prettier every moment in her indignation. "I do love him, papa, with all my heart and soul!"

Aunt Eloise uttered a hollow sigh, and Mr. Bryant looked at his daughter with a face that was half troubled, half amused.

"My little lily-flower," he said, gently, "all this sounds to me like a girl's romance. Maude Bryant is scarcely fitted to be the wife of a young man like Charley May."

"But why not, papa?" pleaded Maude, piteously. "I love him, and I—I think he loves me."

"Very probably," said Mr. Bryant, smiling. "But did it never occur to you how very unsuitable a wife you would make to a man who has his own way to win in the world?"

"No, papa."

"But just consider, my dear; here, on the one hand, is a salary of two hundred a year, and here, on the other, is Miss Bryant, with her little white, useless hands and her luxurious ideas, and her diamonds, and her silk dresses. Why, my child, I don't suppose you know what calico means."

"Yes, indeed, papa," interrupted Maude, earnestly.

"I had a pink French calico once, with pink coral buttons—don't you remember?"

"You a poor man's wife," went on her father, patting her little fevered hand. "Maude, it would be like taking one of the white japonicas out of the conservatory, and planting it on a bleak hill. What idea have you of the trials and sacrifices of life, my little petted child?"

"Papa!" sobbed the young girl, passionately, "I am ready to endure any ordeal—to make any sacrifice. What do I care for diamonds and dresses?—Papa!" she exclaimed, suddenly starting up with emphasis, "you think me a mere butterfly that cares for dress and jewels only. Now listen to me. For one year from this time—for one year, mind—I pledge myself to wear no silks or jewels. Will you believe in me at the year's end?"

"I shall think you a very extraordinary young lady, Maude, but—excuse me, darling—I have no very strong faith in your perseverance."

"You will see," said Maude, shaking her curls triumphantly. "And, oh, papa—if—"

"Maude," said Mr. Bryant, with quiet decision, "I have already answered you—my decree admits of no appeal."

She would not cry any more, this haughty little girl—she was too proud to cry; but she rose up and went away with compressed lips and eyes whose glitter was sadder far than tears.

"I won't be discouraged, for all this," she thought. "I will show papa that I am something more than a doll."

"Maude, you are not going to Mrs. Hemmingsway's in that dress?"

Mrs. Harrington, superb in wine-coloured velvet and jewels, stood horrified as Maude came tripping downstairs.

"Why not, Aunt Eloise? I think the dress is very neat."

Mr. Bryant looked up from his evening paper at the slender figure in white flowing muslin, with white roses hanging among the blue-black curls that touched her shoulders.

"I think so too," he said, quietly.

"Stuff and nonsense!" angrily exclaimed Aunt Eloise. "Richard Bryant's daughter in white muslin with paltry roses in her hair! You should have worn pink satin and diamonds."

"I shall wear no more silks and jewels, aunt," said the little lady, very decidedly.

"Now, Richard," said Mrs. Harrington, turning to her brother, "are you going to allow this?"

"Maude shall do as she pleases," said the merchant, quietly, and Maude gave him a grateful glance as she fluttered away like some snow-white bird.

The next morning a small triangular casket of amethyst velvet lay beside Maude's plate at the breakfast-table. She took it up with an inquiring look at her father.

"Your birthday, my child," he said, simply.

She opened the casket with a low exclamation of delight as her eye fell on the white gleam of a magnificent pearl necklace.

"Oh, papa! how splendid this is! Don't they look like drops of frozen moonlight? And I have always so longed for pearls!"

Mrs. Harrington looked complacently on.

"They will be the very thing to wear to-night with your white silk dress."

"My white silk dress!" Maude paused abruptly, while a deep crimson flush stole over her fair forehead. She rose and crept softly round to her father's side.

"Papa, I am very much obliged to you, but—but I had rather not take the pearls."

"Not take them, Maude?"

"No, papa—you remember my resolution."

"Maude!" exclaimed Aunt Eloise, "you will never be so absurd as to refuse that pearl necklace that a royal princess might be proud to wear, just because of a whim!"

"It is not a whim, Aunt Eloise."

And no amount of coaxing could induce Maude Bryant to take the pearls.

"Give me a bud from the conservatory, papa, or a bit of a book, such as I used to have when I was a wee thing, and I'll value it for your sake as long as I live; but I can't take the pearls."

So the merchant, with a curious moisture in his eyes, gave her a kiss and told her "that would have to do."

And the weeks and months passed on; and Maude, surrounded by temptations on every side, thought of Charley May, and resisted them all.

"Maude," said the old man, suddenly, one day, "when did you last hear from young May?"

"Last hear from him, papa? Never since the day he went away."

"Do you mean to tell me that you do not correspond with him?"

"No, papa! you told me not to, and I have obeyed you."

"And has he never written?"

"Never, sir."

"Then most probably he has forgotten you."

"No, papa—I know he has not forgotten me."

"You're a curious girl, Maude," said her father, caressingly stroking down the bright black curls. "Never mind, pet—when your year of calico is over I'll give you a present that shall please you passing well."

"I don't want any present, papa," said Maude, wistfully looking up into his face. "Oh, papa, there is only one thing in the world that I do want."

"And that you know very well you can't have," said the merchant, sturdily. And so the colloquy terminated.

"Oh, Aunt Eloise, what a magnificent silk! real gold colour, isn't it?"

"Yes, I think it is rather handsome," said Mrs. Harrington, complacently. "I ordered it to be imported myself. See—it shines like a sheet of gold in the gas-light."

"Who is it for?"

"You, to be sure, child—for Oriana Sykes's wedding reception."

Maude shook her head demurely.

"Why, Maude, what will you wear? You must have a new silk."

Maude caught her father's eye fixed earnestly upon her. In an instant her resolution was taken.

"I shall wear calico, Aunt Eloise."

"Calico! To Mrs. Sykes's wedding reception?"

"Why not, aunt?"

"You dare not thus defy society."

"Dare I not?"

That was all Maude said. The year of ordeal was up that night, and she had stood bravely to her colours.

Mr. Bryant did not often attend parties, but he went to Mrs. Sykes's that evening without his daughter's knowledge, and stood leaning against a door casing, watching the brilliant devotees of fashion as they entered in glittering, perfumed throngs—watching them with an anxious eye.

Would Maude waver now? Was her will no stronger than that of five hundred other women?

Presently she came, as lovely as ever, the throng parting on either side, as she advanced up the room at the side of her portly, vexed-looking Aunt Harrington. What was the murmur that reached his ears?

"Pink calico! Calico!—impossible! Miss Bryant wear calico, indeed! Glacé more likely, or moiré antique! Actually calico! what a strange whim! But Maude Bryant looks lovely in anything!"

Lovely—she did look lovely in the soft folds of the French calico, with her sweet eye full of liquid light, and her cheek glowing with soft scarlet.

Mr. Bryant drew a long sigh of relief, and then ordered his carriage for "home."

It was late when Maude returned, but nevertheless she took a peep into the library to see if her father were still up.

"Papa!"

"Come in, Maude. Do you know, pet, your year of probation is up to-night?"

"I don't call it probation, sir."

"Perhaps not. Well, do you remember my promising you a present if you adhered to your odd notions?"

"Yes, papa; but I told you I did not want a present."

"You'll find it in the drawing-room, child."

"I won't take it, papa."

"Won't you? Suppose you just take a look at it first."

And Maude went slowly upstairs, obedient to her father's gesture.

"I will not take it, whatever it is," she thought, as she opened the door, "for—my goodness! Charley May!"

"Maude—my own true love!"

And Charley's bright brown eyes were looking into hers.

"What do you think about taking my present now, Miss Maude?" demanded Mr. Bryant, rubbing his hands gleefully. "I've sent some distance for it, and I think you seem rather pleased with it than otherwise. I tell you what, Charley May, you may imagine that you have been working hard for my daughter all these months, but she has not been idle. Maude has well earned the happiness of this hour."

And Mr. Bryant went downstairs to explain it all to Aunt Eloise, who was highly mystified as to the state of affairs.

This was the solution of the enigma that so puzzled the fashionable world a few days subsequently, when they read in the papers that Maude Bryant had married no more distinguished a person than Charley May.

A R.



THE WRONG DRESS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Golden Mask," "The Stranger's Secret," "Man and His Idol," "The Warning Voice," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XLVII.

HAGGART.

No more! Her pale face meets the glare,
The gleaming torch, the servant's stare,
The wonder of the crowd.
She stands—a queen upon her throne
Ne'er statelier stood than she—alone,
As beautiful as proud. *Joanna of Naples.*

It was impossible but that the Earl of Morant should be astonished at his guest's agitation. So obviously Jacintha was utterly overcome.

But his lordship attributed it to the emotion natural in one who had listened to an unexpected avowal of love, and to interruption at that critical moment.

"Confound the fellow!" he exclaimed, in angry tones, "what did he want here at this moment?" "He—he startled me," the trembling woman faltered.

"No doubt. But this is the curse of a large establishment; there is no privacy, no seclusion. Our very thoughts are intruded on."

"The man was over-zealous——"

"Oh, a mere country lout."

"Not one of the household?"

"No—some helper called in through the number of guests in the house; but enough of him. You are still pale and agitated. Let me take you to the drawing-room."

She consented, almost mechanically, and accepting the earl's arm moved off with him like one in a dream. "Enough of him!"—the words had passed the earl's lips lightly enough; but they rang in the ears of his guest as if they would never be forgotten.

Whoever the man was whom she had suddenly recognized in that humble servitor, the effect of his appearance had been terrible. Confusion and agitation were among the least of the distressing results. All the dignity and stateliness of her manner had vanished. The added beauty which the consciousness of triumph had imparted to her had died away. A worn, suffering look had come into that radiant face. She no longer walked by the earl's side his equal in dignity and self-possession.

Singular, indeed, was the change that had come over her.

Even the becoming toilet in which she had shone with resplendent grace appeared to have lost its

[JACINTHA'S DESPERATE RESOLVE.]

becomingness. There was now neither set, fit, nor propriety in it. The long, rustling train had ceased to sweep, it merely crept after her, and there was not a ribbon, a gem, or flower that did not share the degradation.

And a look had done this!

Watching her intently, as the infatuated peer did, he could but be conscious of this change.

"The fright has quite unnerved you!" he said.

"Only for the moment. It will pass away. The evening is oppressive."

"True: let me place a seat by the window for you."

She glanced at the window with a shudder. The garden stretched from it bright in the moonlight. *He* might be there.

"Thanks—no," she replied.

As the evening wore on the effect of this occurrence passed over in some degree; but the Italian did not recover her high spirits, or that perfect command over herself which was one of her strongest characteristics. It was early when she excused herself to the earl and retired to her room.

Immediately the key was turned in the lock she threw herself upon the bed, and gave way to a paroxysm of feeling, strong, bitter, and utterly overwhelming.

"Ever the same!" she exclaimed, in a tone of the intensest anguish. "My hour of triumph comes, and with it this demon to dash the cup from my lips. In my poverty, want, and shame he disappears; but I have only to rise one step on the ladder of life and he is by my side. Great heaven! is he immortal? Am I to endure this for ever and ever? But for him I might be a countess! I—a countess! How my head whirls and my heart throbs at the thought of this night's triumph! And is it to be crushed by this monster's existence? His death would secure me everything, and cannot I compass that?"

She asked the question in a tone of the deepest awe. Clearly, she who feared nothing, who was brave and resolute, and unscrupulous, trembled at the thought of this man. By some means he had gained the mastery over her, and she feared him. Nay, she more than feared; the thought of him filled her with inexplicable dread; it stopped the beating of her heart, and seemed to freeze the marrow in her bones.

After a long, long pause, in which the oppressive silence of the room was unbroken, she started from the bed.

"I must do it, or I must lose the earl!" she ejaculated.

The night was deliciously bright and still, pre-

senting a strong contrast to the troubled raging of her excited brain.

Full of the suggestion her words implied, she went to the window and looked out.

The trees were sleeping in the moonlight, and far away—far as the eye could reach—the country stretched itself, wrapt in a silver haze, until it was lost in the misty distance. Not a breath, not a leaf stirred. The calmness was almost oppressive, as the slightest movement would have been startling to the listener. Self-absorbed, however, Jacintha heard nothing. Blinded by vanity, she believed in the possibility of her becoming the earl's wife if she could but remove a barrier from her path, and this barrier engaged all her attention, the possibility of removing it exhausted all her ingenuity.

Full of this matter, she leant from the window until the dew was wet upon her hair, and the night breeze had chilled her lips to stone.

Then with a shudder she withdrew, and attired as she was, threw herself upon her bed.

The restless mind remained still active, and if she slept, it was only her body which yielded to fatigue, for her mind was occupied with the same ideas, and pursued the same train of thought. Thus, though she had slept she did not credit it, when a slight sound in the room caused her to look up.

The sound was that of something creaking. Perhaps only some part of the heavy furniture? Or it might be that the door had opened.

No; that, she remembered, was locked.

Starting up, confused and bewildered, she looked eagerly round. Nothing appeared to be disturbed. The window remained open as she had left it, admitting the moonlight. "Ah!" she thought, "it might have been the casement creaking."

No. Casting her eyes in that direction, they encountered an obstacle; a door in the panelled wall was standing open at the foot of the bed. The moonlight cast the broad shadow of it on the bed itself.

"Someone is in the room?" she asked, rather than exclaimed.

A low chuckle was the response.

She sat up.

The fire-place was opposite the open door in the panelling, and an antique chair stood on either side of it. To these chairs her eyes wandered, and the cold dew of terror broke out on her brow as she saw that one of them was occupied.

A man sat in it.

At a glance she recognized the man who had confronted her that night; and, though she knew it not, this was he who had not long since attacked Vivian

Gower on board ship, and who had been spurned by the foot of Jerome as a dog might be spurned.

"Haggart!" she exclaimed, in horror.

His face, always ruffianly, distorted itself in the moonlight.

"What do you here?" she demanded.

"What!"

He laughed, a low, sullen laugh.

"You came here like a thief—"

"Very like. Most like it of anything."

"To plunder me?"

"Yes."

"Unless I give the alarm—unless I raise the house—"

"Which you won't do."

"You think so. You forget that here I am the honoured guest: you are the trespasser. Here my word will be taken before yours. I have but to touch that bell—"

"Don't trouble yourself; let me."

He rose and advanced towards a cord which hung by the fire-place. Already it was within his grasp when a cry from the woman's lips caused him to turn and gaze into her white, terrified face.

"No! You will not dare!" she exclaimed.

He dropped his hand with a sneer.

"Right," he said, "and you—where is your threat? What is it worth? Do you think I came into this house to play the lackey for the mere sake of what my lord would throw to me? Not I! You were my prey. They told me how the rich beauty of Gorewood was queening it at the abbey, and I knew what that meant; I knew that it meant a good turn for me, and I've made no mistake. Your good fortune's my harvest. So it has been all along; so it will be to the last, take my word for it!"

"Would to heaven I could take your word for anything!" cried the wretched woman.

"You may for that," he sneered.

"If one spark of honour or humanity lingered in your breast," she persisted; "if you were anything but a mere brute without a manly instinct or a generous emotion, there might be some tie between us beside that of plunder on your side, and terror on mine."

He shook his head as if that were out of the question.

"I know," she said, "that I speak of what can never be. No promise is sacred in your eyes. No oath could bind you; no writing that human ingenuity could devise would restrain you from molesting me. Without honour, without shame, without remorse—you are more of brute beast than man, and words are wasted on you."

She had slid from the bed and was pacing to and fro as she spoke. Haggart, as she had called him, sat crouched in the chair, with his knees drawn up to his chin, which rested on them.

"Was I always so?" he demanded, in a tone different to any which he had yet used.

"Yes," she flashed at him.

"Was I? Never human, never loving, never trusting or to be trusted?"

"Never," she replied, firmly.

Exasperated by the answer as by the sting of a reptile, he sprang up.

"Repeat that," he said, "and I will strike you dead! You know the truth. You know that I am what your arts have made me. You know that you rewarded my love and trust, with treachery and deceit, that you filled my heart with bitterness, blighted me, ruined me, and left me grovelling and writhing as a crushed worm. But the worm turns on the heel that crushed it, and then it is venomous, desperate, and ruthless. The wrong you did me has made me the terror you dread. To you I am, and must be, what you have said. My heart is stone, my blood is gall, I can feel neither pity nor remorse—I only remember you are helpless and in my power, and that my profit and my revenge—thank heaven!—are one."

Listening, the agitated woman still paced to and fro, her long black hair streaming over her shoulders in the moonlight.

Presently she stopped abruptly.

"I have offered you an annuity," she said.

He snapped the fingers of his right hand in contempt.

"My offer was a liberal one," she continued, "even when it would have tried me sorely to adhere to it."

"And I refused it."

"Because it pleases your nature better to play the brigand, to plunder me of my trinkets, my gifts and souvenirs, to tear the rings from my ears, the gems from my fingers, to leave me degraded and penniless. Your monstrous nature finds delight in that."

"It does: what then?"

"Why this, that, sooner or later, you will defeat yourself. The poverty I loathe is more endurable than wealth accumulated for your use. It is in vain that I strive to rise if in rising I have to drag you after me."

"And yet you strive?"

"I have done so."

"Have? You do it now. What bounds the horizon of your ambition now—a coronet?"

She gasped and caught up her hands to her throat at the sound.

"It is false—" she began.

"What! you forget!"

"I tell you—"

"There is no need. Did I not see? Was not the earl at your feet? Do you think I did not listen to his words?"

"Mere idle talk—"

"As you would have me believe? No doubt. You will hardly look me in the face and tell me, 'the Earl of Morant makes me his countess.' But were I powerless, were I dead—"

"Dead!"

The word shot from her lips like a scream.

Even the man himself drew back a step and his lower jaw dropped.

"I repeat," he said, "would this be impossible were I absent, dead, or helpless?"

"What if I admit that it might be? To what end do we discuss this? You will come to no terms, and if you did, the engagement of to-night would be broken to-morrow. You are cruel, you are merciless!"

"And you—what would you have me be? Is it as brute or man that I should comply with the ambition of your heart, and say 'I yield you freely and readily to the earl's arms'? In all that is monstrous in your career there is nothing that would exceed that, yet for that permission, securely guaranteed, you would offer me—"

"A princely sum," she cried, eagerly.

"No! Not the universe!"

"And yet you do not hesitate to rob?"

"If to take my own is robbery!"

"Idle sophistry!" cried the indignant woman; "of all things hateful to me, the worst is the affectation of virtue. To what does all this amount? To this—that you and I have long since quitted the narrow path of what the world calls goodness; but it is my misfortune to have taken a step that offends your self-love."

"And places you in my power."

"To a degree—yes. But take care. There is a limit even to that. Be reasonable; let me pursue the upward path unmolested, and the position I shall attain will be the guarantee of your substantial hold over me. But take an opposite course; interfere with my projects, forbid my advancement, drag me down to your level or below it, and I shall become indifferent to your bad word or your good. So the course you are pursuing is suicidal. You are killing the goose for the golden eggs, and you have not the wit to perceive it."

"I have at least the wit to profit by your present position," the man retorted, angrily. "You forget that I have not only my purse to fill, but my revenge to gratify. You forget that you have sacrificed all claims to my consideration or forbearance, and that in what I now do I only wipe off the old score about which your memory is so bad and mine so retentive. But we waste time: I come here to-night to warn you that in the step you are contemplating, I shall have to be considered. You may win a coronet, but I shall be there to help myself to some of the jewels from it. Understand that, and now what about my present requirements? What have we here?"

He turned towards the dressing-table as he spoke, and those cruel, blood-shot eyes of his glistened as they encountered an open jewel-box, in which diamond and amethyst, ruby and sapphire, glistened in the moonlight.

Without a moment's hesitation, he caught up the box and tilted its contents into the yawning side-pocket of the coat he wore.

"Haggart!" exclaimed Jacintha, remonstratingly.

"Well, what is it?" he demanded, turning sharply on her.

"You will not take all?"

"And why not?"

"How can I appear without my jewels? How can I account for their disappearance?"

"Fobaw! What is that to me?"

As he spoke he dashed at a thin gold chain that encircled her neck, and as this snapped with the violence, a diamond-studded watch fell to the ground.

The ruffian caught it up with a swoop of his big hand.

"Monster!" cried the exasperated woman, her eyes flashing, and her bosom heaving with indignation.

"Exactly, and in that character I will trouble you for a little ready money. These gew-gaws are worth something, but they won't pass current. I must have money."

"You cannot," was the answer.

"Why?"

"I have none."

The fellow burst into a laugh.

Then suddenly seizing both her wrists in a grasp of iron, he exclaimed:

"Provoke me to personal violence and blame will be on your own head. I must have money. I will have it. Give it to me."

He released her hands, throwing her from him as he did so, and she, trembling from head to foot, answered not a word, but moved towards a writing-desk that stood upon an escreteire, and slowly opened it.

The eyes of the man were upon her, but her face was from him, and he did not see the deadly greenish pallor that came into it, the unnatural light that dilated the eyes, or the twitching of the lips significant of some deep, inscrutable purpose. Enough for him that he was obeyed, and that the money he coveted was forthcoming. It consisted of a roll of notes, which he snatched from the hand that held them, and thrust into his bosom.

Intent on the notes he did not regard the face of their owner.

Neither did the changed tone in which she addressed him awaken surprise or create alarm.

"You leave me penniless, Haggart," she said, in a voice that struggled to be calm.

"I found you so," was his only answer.

Then he hesitated, and his ravenous eyes glanced around the chamber, as if in quest of farther spoil. Nothing attracting his avaricious gaze, he threw at the agitated woman a glance of insolent contempt, and turned towards the opening in the panel, by means of which he had entered. As he took a step towards it Jacintha also moved, drawn on, as it appeared, by some irresistible fascination. He did not notice this, and hardly looked towards her as he indulged in a chuckling, satisfied laugh.

No suspicion of treachery seemed to cross his mind.

He drew towards the open panel.

The moonlight had shifted, and no longer rested on the opening, which yawned dark and cavernous. Nothing indicated that within the gloom there was a ladder by means of which he had ascended from the abyss. To find these steps it was necessary that Haggart should stoop closely. Had he, before doing so, once glanced behind him, he would have perceived that Jacintha had advanced with him step for step, and now stood at his back, her face set and her eyes luminous with a deadly purpose.

Not a word more passed on either side.

The man, intent on retreating with his booty, stooped forward into the darkness, seeking the first round of the ladder on which to place his foot. Already he had perceived it, and the foot was raised in the act of stepping, when, with a movement, lightning swift, Jacintha darted forth her hands, and striking the unsuspecting being with all her force, sent him, head foremost, into the yawning darkness.

A cry broke from his lips, and there was a sound as of a falling body striking obstacles in its descent. Then came a dull, heavy thud, and all was still.

Panting, palpitating, unable to still the riotous throbbing of her heart, Jacintha stood at the open panel and listened—listened long and earnestly.

One moan rose from the well-like depth, then all was quiet.

"Dead!" she muttered.

Then rushing to the bell beside the fire-place, she dragged at it with a fury and determination that soon startled the household from slumber, and it was not long before she had the satisfaction of hearing the tramping of feet as the domestics rushed to her assistance.

CHAPTER XLVII.

MY PRISON LIFE.

Had it pleased heaven

To try me with affliction: had it rain'd

All kinds of sores and shames on my bare head,

Stoop'd me in poverty to the very lips,

I should have found in some place of my soul

A drop of patience.

Othello.

LET me here resume the thread of my own narrative.

It was interrupted at the point where, having been decoyed to Gasparo's house, in the hope of these meeting my charming Violet, I found myself entrapped—exposed to the unwelcome addresses of a boor, and, on my refusal to accept him, made prisoner in the house of the unscrupulous Italian.

In this, as in most of his proceedings, Gasparo had proceeded on his knowledge of the insufficient protection which the law of England extends to women and children. It is a lamentable fact that any ruffian who is acute enough to avoid some few well-defined offences may treat the helpless beings in his power almost with impunity. Recent cases have illustrated this defect in our law, and Gasparo was fully alive to the courses he could pursue without risk of falling into the hands of justice.

When I came to reflect on it I could hardly fail to understand my position. Oliver had taken my place

at Gorewood, and the tremendous interests involved in that substitution rendered it necessary that at all risks I should be removed out of the way, and that so effectually that return would be impossible. This task—for which he was so well fitted—Gasparo had undertaken.

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Terror strengthened my belief, till I persuaded myself that it was so, and gasped and trembled at every breath.

Even when the idea presented itself that I might be disquieting myself in vain, I determined that, remembering the arts that had been practised on Violet Maldon, I would neither eat nor drink in that loathsome house.

So when late that night the hateful Dan suddenly presented himself, entering the room I knew not how, and starting me with terror as he placed one broad hand on my shoulder, and pointed to a tray of food which he bore in the other, I recoiled from it with repugnance.

"Hullo!" he cried, incredulous at my refusal.

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One source of satisfaction, and one only, was to be derived from this performance. Evidently my fears in one direction were exaggerated. There was no intention to dispatch me by means of poisoned food—at least, not for the present.

To that extent I could rest satisfied, unless indeed Dan had himself fallen into the trap placed for me? It was just possible that he might have swallowed deleterious ingredients in ignorance, but this time would show.

Certainly there was not much to alarm me in the appearance of the monster, when an hour later he reappeared in as sudden and startling a manner as before, shaking me out of a reverie by his expressive—"Hullo!"

I demanded his pleasure.

"Bed," he condescended to reply.

Then, leading the way, he conducted me from the room I had occupied, up a gloomy staircase, until we had reached a room at the top of the house. It was

a small, neat room, simply furnished, with barred windows and an iron-plated door. As the moonlight shone in brightly, I needed no light, and leaving me none, Dan nodded, grinned the full width of his terrible mouth, and so departed.

I was a prisoner. Dan was my jailer. And, black as was the present, the future lay before me yet darker. I would never consent to be the wife of a man I despised. And if I did not?

The alternative left me shuddering.

Yet throughout the sleepless hours of that night I thought less of myself than of those in whose fate I was so deeply interested. What of Oliver, what of poor wounded Violet? Albany too, what had resulted from his pursuit of his intended murderer? These were the questions that beset me. Even poor Tadge excited my sympathy as I reflected on her alarm at my protracted absence.

As a relief to these painful reflections, the daylight was inexpressibly welcome.

In due time it brought with it my jailer, and under his care I returned to my prison on the lower floor.

To my surprise, I found on entering that breakfast was laid there with some approach to style, and that Gasparo himself was present to partake of it.

As I entered, he turned on me from the fire over which he was bending intent on the little row of black pipkins which I had seen him superintend in the old house in London.

The sight of them brought back all the horrors of that place.

Much as I had loathed him from the first moment of our meeting, I never regarded him with such intense aversion as at that moment.

"Ah, we are late! We are drowsy sleepers, eh?" he exclaimed, tasting some oily compound from a spoon between the two sentences.

"You have forgotten your promise," I returned, utterly disregarding his remarks. "I have not yet seen Violet."

The remark cost him a moment's embarrassment.

"You have no patience," he then said.

"Patience!" I exclaimed. "You are deceiving me. You have lured me here under a false pretence. Violet is not here: she is not expected."

"Suppose, then, we cease to talk of her, and attend to our own affairs. You have thought over the folly of last night? And what do you say? Do you accept the husband we have provided for you?"

"Accept him!" I cried, indignantly. "I would rather—"

"No, no! Let us have no heroics. 'Tis a very simple matter. Yes or no?"

"No, then."

"Good! I expected as much. You are under a delusion, and, until that is removed, I have every right to expect that you will be obstinately bent on your own ruin. You have an impression that the young heir of Gorewood regards you in his new and exalted station with the same feelings that animated him when he was poor and struggling. You live in the vague hope of becoming his wife?"

"I believe in his truth and constancy," I replied.

"You do? I knew it. Nothing is more natural at your years."

"And I shall continue to trust him—"

"Until you have proof of his faithlessness?"

"Yes."

"And suppose I produced that proof?"

"You cannot!" I exclaimed, with confidence.

"No?"

A sickening smile diffused itself like a lubrication over his yellow face as he said this.

Then he took from the pocket of his morning gown a letter, and handed it to me.

"Do you know that writing?" he said, folding down a portion of the letter, so as to show me a few lines.

I could not question it.

Oliver's hand was bold, distinct, and peculiar. I detected it in a moment, from the lines shown to me, and I admitted it.

"Read, then," said Gasparo.

I grasped the paper with trembling hands, and perused these words:

"You know you have realized—for you have told me so—what love is. You will not, therefore, regard my language as extravagant, nor smile when I open to you the depths of my secret heart. It is the privilege of your sex to inspire this passion in mine. You know this, and therefore you will understand how feebly words convey the deep, absorbing passion of my heart, and the earnestness with which I could appeal to you. Do not refuse me. Do not let any consideration induce you to return a cold, stern negative. I address you under the seal of secrecy, because I dare not speak out. I dare not confess my passion. I can only entreat you to believe in its sincerity, and act a generous part. You have known me only as poor and helpless; circumstances have greatly changed with me, but heart has not changed. The passion which inspired it once

and when I could not give utterance to it, inspires me still. I can offer you no stronger proof than this of my firm, unalterable love. At least, then, you will write to me. You will not keep me in suspense. Every moment is one of agony until I hear the answer from your lips, and know what my fate is. Happiness or misery hang upon your lips—remember this; pity and sympathize with me—"

I read no more.

The letter slipped from my fingers and fluttered to the floor.

Gasparo hastily snatched it up, folded it, and returned it to his pocket.

"Do you believe that letter genuine?" he asked.

"I cannot doubt it."

"Was it addressed to you?"

"No."

"Good. Was I right or wrong, then, when I told you that you were deceived? when I said it was necessary to destroy an illusion before I could bring you to common-sense?"

I did not answer, my heart was like a stone. All sympathy with life, all care for myself, my present and my future, seemed to go from me with my faith in Oliver. As in letters of fire, I read the words, "He has written this! he has not written it to me," and the self-torturing conclusion overwhelmed and crushed me under the weight of it.

Once I strove against it. I forced myself to remember the false and treacherous nature of the man who sat before me, but I could not question the genuineness of the letter, and could not help feeling that it would have been impossible that such words should have escaped from my lips unless I had addressed them to the one object of my devotion. And what would have been desecration of my part was no less so on his.

This reflection agitated me so powerfully that for awhile I felt incapable of listening to Gasparo. He talked on, argued and reasoned with me; but I was incapable of following his arguments, and only knew that he spoke to me, and that I answered wildly and incoherently.

"But you have not told me to whom this letter is addressed," I burst in, as he wandered on.

"Since it is not to you—"

"True. I have no right to ask."

"And I cannot volunteer information that would only add to your distress, and expose an innocent woman to your just indignation. Nor would I have made this disclosure of the young man's perfidy, only that I knew you were deceived, that you were the victim of a delusion."

"Would to heaven I had died before that delusion was put an end to!" I ejaculated, fervently.

"Nonsense! You talk of death lightly enough now that you are young, and have a long life before you. Wait till you reach my years—"

His voice faltered.

He stopped.

With amazement, I perceived that he was greatly agitated and overcome. Clearly I had detected the one weak point about this wicked, this callous and indifferent man. He feared death. The thought of the inevitable end that would put a period to all his villainies, and rob him of the carefully stored fruits of them, convulsed him with alarm.

Any sight more pitiable I had never seen.

The paroxysm was hardly over, and he had scarce time to collect himself by reference to the offer of Abel Dormer, which he affected to regard as the only practical cure for my distress of heart, when a violent tapping at the door of the house startled us.

Gasparo started to his feet, and listened.

The knocking was repeated again and again impatiently.

Then there was a noise occasioned by the rattling of bolts and bars, and the door, swinging heavily, opened.

"Signor Gasparo is here. Let me see him!" said a voice.

I recognized it instantly, and its tones went to my heart, and caused me to tremble so that I could have sunk to the ground with emotion.

It was Oliver who had uttered those words!

The gruff voice of Dan in reply rumbled through the house, but what he said was not audible to us.

"It is false," Oliver retorted, quickly. "He is here, and I will see him."

Again a denial, and again Oliver expressed his determination. Then we heard that Dan indulged in his "Hullo!" of surprise, and there was a scuffle. Oliver was forcing his way in.

Gasparo might have had his own motives for wishing to prevent a scene of violence. At this point, therefore, he quitted the room, letting the door close sharply with its spring behind him, and I could hear that he descended the stairs.

"See! He is here, himself!" I heard Oliver cry out.

Gower on board ship, and who had been spurned by the foot of Jerome as a dog might be spurned.

"Haggart!" she exclaimed, in horror.
His face, always ruffianly, distorted itself in the moonlight.

"What do you here?" she demanded.

"What!"

He laughed, a low, sullen laugh.

"You came here like a thief—"

"Very like. Most like it of anything."

"To plunder me?"

"Yes."

"Unless I give the alarm—unless I raise the house—"

"Which you won't do."

"You think so. You forget that here I am the honoured guest: you are the trespasser. Here my word will be taken before yours. I have but to touch that bell—"

"Don't trouble yourself; let me."

He rose and advanced towards a cord which hung by the fire-place. Already it was within his grasp when a cry from the woman's lips caused him to turn and gaze into her white, terrified face.

"No! You will not dare!" she exclaimed.

He dropped his hand with a snarl.

"Right," he said, "and you—where is your threat? What is it worth? Do you think I came into this house to play the lackey for the mere sake of what my lord would throw to me? Not I! You were my prey. They told me how the rich beauty of Gorewood was queening it at the abbey, and I knew what that meant; I knew that it meant a good turn for me, and I've made no mistake. Your good fortune's my harvest. So it has been all along; so it will be to the last, take my word for it!"

"Would to heaven I could take your word for anything!" cried the wretched woman.

"You may for that," he sneered.

"If one spark of honour or humanity lingered in your breast," she persisted; "if you were anything but a mere brute without a manly instinct or a generous emotion, there might be some tie between us beside that of plunder on your side, and terror on mine."

He shook his head as if that were out of the question.

"I know," she said, "that I speak of what can never be. No promise is sacred in your eyes. No oath could bind you; no writing that human ingenuity could devise would restrain you from molesting me. Without honour, without shame, without remorse—you are more of brute beast than man, and words are wasted on you."

She had slid from the bed and was pacing to and fro as she spoke. Haggart, as she had called him, sat crouched in the chair, with his knees drawn up to his chin, which rested on them.

"Was I always so?" he demanded, in a tone different to any which he had yet used.

"Yes," she flashed at him.

"Was I? Never human, never loving, never trusting or to be trusted?"

"Never," she replied, firmly.

Exasperated by the answer as by the sting of a reptile, he sprang up.

"Repeat that," he said, "and I will strike you dead! You know the truth. You know that I am what your arts have made me. You know that you rewarded my love and trust, with treachery and deceit, that you filled my heart with bitterness, blighted me, ruined me, and left me grovelling and writhing as a crushed worm. But the worm turns on the heel that crushed it, and then it is venomous, desperate, and ruthless. The wrong you did me has made me the terror you dread. To you I am, and must be, what you have said. My heart is stone, my blood is gall, I can feel neither pity nor remorse—I only remember you are helpless and in my power, and that my profit and my revenge—thank heaven!—are one."

Listening, the agitated woman still paced to and fro, her long black hair streaming over her shoulders in the moonlight.

Presently she stopped abruptly.

"I have offered you an annuity," she said.

He snapped the fingers of his right hand in contempt.

"My offer was a liberal one," she continued, "even when it would have tried me sorely to adhere to it."

"And I refused it."

"Because it pleases your nature better to play the brigand, to plunder me of my trinkets, my gifts and souvenirs, to tear the rings from my ears, the gems from my fingers, to leave me degraded and penniless. Your monstrous nature finds delight in that."

"It does: what then?"

"Why this, that, sooner or later, you will defeat yourself. The poverty I loathe is more endurable than wealth accumulated for your use. It is in vain that I strive to rise if in rising I have to drag you after me."

"And yet you strive?"

"I have done so."

"Have? You do it now. What bounds the horizon of your ambition now—a coronet?"

She gasped and caught up her hands to her throat at the sound.

"It is false—" she began.

"What! you forget!"

"I tell you—"

"There is no need. Did I not see? Was not the earl at your feet? Do you think I did not listen to his words?"

"Mere idle talk—"

"As you would have me believe? No doubt. You will hardly look me in the face and tell me, 'the Earl of Morant makes me his countess.' But were I powerless, were I dead—"

"Dead!"

The word shot from her lips like a scream.

Even the man himself drew back a step and his lower jaw dropped.

"I repeat," he said, "would this be impossible were I absent, dead, or helpless?"

"What if I admit that it might be? To what end do we discuss this? You will come to no terms, and if you did, the engagement of to-night would be broken to-morrow. You are cruel, you are merciless!"

"And you—what would you have me be? Is it as brute or man that I should comply with the ambition of your heart, and say 'I yield you freely and readily to the earl's arms? In all that is monstrous in your career there is nothing that would exceed that, yet for that permission, securely guaranteed, you would offer me—'"

"A princely sum," she cried, eagerly.

"No! Not the universe!"

"And yet you do not hesitate to rob?"

"If to take my own is robbery!"

"Idle sophistry!" cried the indignant woman; "of all things hateful to me, the worst is the affectation of virtue. To what does all this amount? To this—that you and I have long since quitted the narrow path of what the world calls goodness; but it is my misfortune to have taken a step that offends your self-love."

"And places you in my power."

"To a degree—yes. But take care. There is a limit even to that. Be reasonable; let me pursue the upward path un molested, and the position I shall attain will be the guarantee of your substantial hold over me. But take an opposite course; interfere with my projects, forbid my advancement, drag me down to your level or below it, and I shall become indifferent to your bad word or your good. So the course you are pursuing is suicidal. You are killing the goose for the golden eggs, and you have not the wit to perceive it."

"I have at least the wit to profit by your present position," the man retorted, angrily. "You forget that I have not only my purse to fill, but my revenge to gratify. You forget that you have sacrificed all claims to my consideration or forbearance, and that in what I now do I only wipe off the old score about which your memory is so bad and mine so retentive. But we waste time: I come here to-night to warn you that in the step you are contemplating, I shall have to be considered. You may win a coronet, but I shall be there to help myself to some of the jewels from it. Understand that, and now what about my present requirements? What have we here?"

He turned towards the dressing-table as he spoke, and those cruel, blood-shot eyes of his glistened as they encountered an open jewel-box, in which diamond and amethyst, ruby and sapphire, glistened in the moonlight.

Without a moment's hesitation, he caught up the box and tilted its contents into the yawning side-pocket of the coat he wore.

"Haggart!" exclaimed Jacintha, remonstratingly.

"Well, what is it?" he demanded, turning sharply on her.

"You will not take all?"

"And why not?"

"How can I appear without my jewels? How can I account for their disappearance?"

"Pshaw! What is that to me?"

As he spoke he dashed at a thin gold chain that encircled her neck, and, as this snapped with the violence, a diamond-studded watch fell to the ground.

The ruffian caught it up with a swoop of his big hand.

"Monster!" cried the exasperated woman, her eyes flashing, and her bosom heaving with indignation.

"Exactly, and in that character I will trouble you for a little ready money. These gew-gaws are worth something, but they won't pass current. I must have money."

"You cannot," was the answer.

"Why?"

"I have none."

The fellow burst into a laugh.

Then suddenly seizing both her wrists in a grasp of iron, he exclaimed:

"Provoke me to personal violence and blame will be on your own head. I must have money. I will have it. Give it to me."

He released her hands, throwing her from him as he did so, and she, trembling from head to foot, answered not a word, but moved towards a writing-desk that stood upon an secretaire, and slowly opened it.

The eyes of the man were upon her, but her face was from him, and he did not see the deadly greenish pallor that came into it, the unnatural light that dilated the eyes, or the twitching of the lips significant of some deep, inscrutable purpose. Enough for him that he was obeyed, and that the money he coveted was forthcoming. It consisted of a roll of notes, which he snatched from the hand that held them, and thrust into his bosom.

Intent on the notes he did not regard the face of their owner.

Neither did the changed tone in which she addressed him awaken surprise or create alarm.

"You leave me penniless, Haggart," she said, in a voice that struggled to be calm.

"I found you so," was his only answer.

Then he hesitated, and his ravenous eyes glanced around the chamber, as if in quest of farther spoil. Nothing attracting his avaricious gaze, he threw at the agitated woman a glance of insolent contempt, and turned towards the opening in the panel, by means of which he had entered. As he took a step towards it Jacintha also moved, drawn on, as it appeared, by some irresistible fascination. He did not notice this, and hardly looked towards her as he indulged in a chuckling, satisfied laugh.

No suspicion of treachery seemed to cross his mind. He drew towards the open panel.

The moonlight had shifted, and no longer rested on the opening, which yawned dark and cavernous. Nothing indicated that within the gloom there was a ladder by means of which he had ascended from the abyss. To find these steps it was necessary that Haggart should stoop closely. Had he, before doing so, once glanced behind him, he would have perceived that Jacintha had advanced with him step for step, and now stood at his back, her face set and her eyes luminous with a deadly purpose.

Not a word more passed on either side.

The man, intent on retreating with his booty, stooped forward into the darkness, seeking the first round of the ladder on which to place his foot. Already he had perceived it, and the foot was raised in the act of stepping, when, with a movement, lightning swift, Jacintha darted forth her hands, and striking the unsuspecting being with all her force, sent him, head foremost, into the yawning darkness.

A cry broke from his lips, and there was a sound as of a falling body striking obstacles in its descent. Then came a dull, heavy thud, and all was still.

Panting, palpitating, unable to still the riotous throbbing of her heart, Jacintha stood at the open panel and listened—listened long and earnestly.

One moan rose from the well-like depth, then all was quiet.

"Dead!" she muttered.

Then rushing to the bell beside the fire-place, she dragged at it with a fury and determination that soon startled the household from slumber, and it was not long before she had the satisfaction of hearing the trampling of feet as the domestics rushed to her assistance.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

MY PRISON LIFE.

Had it pleased heaven.

To try me with affliction: had it rain'd

All kinds of sores and shames on my bare head,

Steep'd me in poverty to the very lips,

I should have found in some place of my soul

A drop of patience.

Othello.

LET me here resume the thread of my own narrative.

It was interrupted at the point where, having been decoyed to Gasparo's house, in the hope of these meeting my charming Violet, I found myself entrapped—exposed to the unwelcome addresses of a boor, and, on my refusal to accept him, made prisoner in the house of the unscrupulous Italian.

In this, as in most of his proceedings, Gasparo had proceeded on his knowledge of the insufficient protection which the law of England extends to women and children. It is a lamentable fact that any ruffian who is acute enough to avoid some few well-defined offences may treat the helpless beings in his power almost with impunity. Recent cases have illustrated this defect in our law, and Gasparo was fully alive to the courses he could pursue without risk of falling into the hands of justice.

When I came to reflect on it I could hardly fail to understand my position. Oliver had taken my place

at Gorewood, and the tremendous interests involved in that substitution rendered it necessary that at all risks I should be removed out of the way, and that so effectually that return would be impossible. This task—for which he was so well fitted—Gasparo had undertaken.

There were, I could see, two ways in which he might discharge it.

One was comparatively simple, the other involved a very responsible step.

Emigration—or, in other words, banishment—might avail, and if it did not, was not Gasparo an expert in those arts which secure safe and easy death?

Had I accepted the offer of marriage with the intending emigrant, Abel Dormer, the object of my removal would have been effected.

But I had refused!

What, then, was likely to follow?

Sitting alone in that solitary chamber, with no means of retreat, and cut off from the possibility of aid or assistance from without, this question became a serious one. It presented itself to me in innumerable shapes, and all of them more or less terrifying. It weighed upon my spirits with a singular power of depression against which I fought in vain, filling my mind with horrors and sources of alarm which drove me to the verge of madness.

My brow burned with feverish excitement; my eyelids grew heavy, and my heart ached.

As the hours went on I terrified myself with phantoms of my own creation.

It seemed to me not improbable that the effects from which I suffered were the result of Gasparo's arts. He who was master of all the subtle poisons and malific influences at the command of the chemist might, for all I knew, be impregnating the air of that stifling room with deadly malaria.

Why, I asked myself, was it necessary that food and drink should be made the vehicles of destruction?

There were substances in nature deadly enough and surely subtle enough to do their fatal work through the lungs alone, while they were incapable of being detected by the scent! And might it not happen that the air I breathed at that moment was charged with death?

Terror strengthened my belief, till I persuaded myself that it was so, and gasped and trembled at every breath.

Even when the idea presented itself that I might be disquieting myself in vain, I determined that, remembering the arts that had been practised on Violet Maldon, I would neither eat nor drink in that loathsome house.

So when late that night the hateful Dan suddenly presented himself, entering the room I knew not how, and startling me with terror as he placed one broad hand on my shoulder, and pointed to a tray of food which he bore in the other, I recoiled from it with repugnance.

"Hullo!" he cried, incredulous at my refusal.

But I put it away with every symptom of aversion. "Not eat?" he exclaimed, his astonishment forcing him into that, for him, long sentence.

"I am not hungry," I replied.

"All right."

And as he spoke he seized the portion of food designed for me, and opening his capacious mouth, disposed of it in one mouthful.

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One source of satisfaction, and one only, was to be derived from this performance. Evidently my fears in one direction were exaggerated. There was no intention to dispatch me by means of poisoned food—at least, not for the present.

To that extent I could rest satisfied, unless indeed Dan had himself fallen into the trap placed for me? It was just possible that he might have swallowed deleterious ingredients in ignorance, but this time would show.

Certainly there was not much to alarm me in the appearance of the monster, when an hour later he reappeared in an sudden and startling manner as before, shaking me out of a reverie by his expressive—"Hullo!"

I demanded his pleasure.

"Bed," he condescended to reply.

Then, leading the way, he conducted me from the room I had occupied, up a gloomy staircase, until we had reached a room at the top of the house. It was

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I was a prisoner. Dan was my jailer. And, black as was the present, the future lay before me yet darker. I would never consent to be the wife of a man I despised. And if I did not?

The alternative left me shuddering.

Yet throughout the sleepless hours of that night I thought less of myself than of those in whose fate I was so deeply interested. What of Oliver, what of poor wounded Violet? Albany too, what had resulted from his pursuit of his intended murderer? These were the questions that beset me. Even poor Tadge excited my sympathy as I reflected on her alarm at my protracted absence.

As a relief to these painful reflections, the daylight was inexpressibly welcome.

In due time it brought with it my jailer, and under his care I returned to my prison on the lower floor.

To my surprise, I found on entering that breakfast was laid there with some approach to style, and that Gasparo himself was present to partake of it.

As I entered, he turned on me from the fire over which he was bending intent on the little row of black pipkins which I had seen him superintend in the old house in London.

The sight of them brought back all the horrors of that place.

Much as I had loathed him from the first moment of our meeting, I never regarded him with such intense aversion as at that moment.

"Ah, we are late! We are drowsy sleepers, eh?" he exclaimed, tasting some oily compound from a spoon between the two sentences.

"You have forgotten your promise," I returned, utterly disregarding his remarks. "I have not yet seen Violet."

The remark cost him a moment's embarrassment.

"You have no patience," he then said.

"Patience!" I exclaimed. "You are deceiving me. You have lured me here under a false pretence. Violet is not here: she is not expected."

"Suppose, then, we cease to talk of her, and attend to our own affairs. You have thought over the folly of last night? And what do you say? Do you accept the husband we have provided for you?"

"Accept him?" I cried, indignantly. "I would rather—"

"No, no! Let us have no heroics. 'Tis a very simple matter. Yes or no?"

"No, then."

"Good! I expected as much. You are under a delusion, and, until that is removed, I have every right to expect that you will be obstinately bent on your own ruin. You have an impression that the young heir of Gorewood regards you in his new and exalted station with the same feelings that animated him when he was poor and struggling. You live in the vague hope of becoming his wife?"

"I believe in his truth and constancy," I replied.

"You do? I knew it. Nothing is more natural at your years."

"And I shall continue to trust him—"

"Until you have proof of his faithlessness?"

"Yes."

"And suppose I produced that proof?"

"You cannot!" I exclaimed, with confidence.

"No?"

A sickening smile diffused itself like a lubrication over his yellow face as he said this.

Then he took from the pocket of his morning gown a letter, and handed it to me.

"Do you know that writing?" he said, folding down a portion of the letter, so as to show me a few lines.

I could not question it.

Oliver's hand was bold, distinct, and peculiar. I detected it in a moment, from the lines shown to me, and I admitted it.

"Read, then," said Gasparo.

I grasped the paper with trembling hands, and perused these words:

"You know you have realized—for you have told me so—what love is. You will not, therefore, regard my language as extravagant, nor smile when I open to you the depths of my secret heart. It is the privilege of your sex to inspire this passion in mine. You know this, and therefore you will understand how feebly words convey the deep, absorbing passion of my heart, and the earnestness with which I could appeal to you. Do not refuse me. Do not let any consideration induce you to return a cold, stern negative. I address you under the seal of secrecy, because I dare not speak out. I dare not confess my passion. I can only entreat you to believe in its sincerity, and act a generous part. You have known me only as poor and helpless; circumstances have greatly changed with me, but heart has not changed. The passion which inspired it once

and when I could not give utterance to it, inspires me still. I can offer you no stronger proof than this of my firm, unalterable love. At least, then, you will write to me. You will not keep me in suspense. Every moment is one of agony until I hear the answer from your lips, and know what my fate is. Happiness or misery hang upon your lips—remember this; pity and sympathize with me—"

I read no more.

The letter slipped from my fingers and fluttered to the floor.

Gasparo hastily snatched it up, folded it, and returned it to his pocket.

"Do you believe that letter genuine?" he asked.

"I cannot doubt it."

"Was it addressed to you?"

"No."

"Good. Was I right or wrong, then, when I told you that you were deceived? when I said it was necessary to destroy an illusion before I could bring you to common-sense?"

I did not answer, my heart was like a stone. All sympathy with life, all care for myself, my present and my future, seemed to go from me with my faith in Oliver. As in letters of fire, I read the words, "He has written this! he has not written it to me," and the self-torturing conclusion overwhelmed and crushed me under the weight of it.

Once I strove against it. I forced myself to remember the false and treacherous nature of the man who sat before me, but I could not question the genuineness of the letter, and could not help feeling that it would have been impossible that such words should have escaped from my lips unless I had addressed them to the one object of my devotion. And what would have been desecration on my part was no less so on his.

This reflection agitated me so powerfully that for awhile I felt incapable of listening to Gasparo. He talked on, argued and reasoned with me; but I was incapable of following his arguments, and only knew that he spoke to me, and that I answered wildly and incoherently.

"But you have not told me to whom this letter is addressed," I burst in, as he wandered on.

"Since it is not to you—"

"True. I have no right to ask."

"And I cannot volunteer information that would only add to your distress, and expose an innocent woman to your just indignation. Nor would I have made this disclosure of the young man's perfidy, only that I knew you were deceived, that you were the victim of a delusion."

"Would to heaven I had died before that delusion was put an end to!" I ejaculated, fervently.

"Nonsense! You talk of death lightly enough now that you are young, and have a long life before you. Wait till you reach my years—"

His voice faltered.

He stopped.

With amazement, I perceived that he was greatly agitated and overcome. Clearly I had detected the one weak point about this wicked, this callous and indifferent man. He feared death. The thought of the inevitable end that would put a period to all his villainies, and rob him of the carefully stored fruits of them, convulsed him with alarm.

Any sight more pitiable I had never seen.

The paroxysm was hardly over, and he had scarce time to collect himself by reference to the offer of Abel Dormer, which he affected to regard as the only practical cure for my distress of heart, when a violent tapping at the door of the house startled us.

Gasparo started to his feet, and listened.

The knocking was repeated again and again impatiently.

Then there was a noise occasioned by the rattling of bolts and bars, and the door, swinging heavily, opened.

"Signor Gasparo is here. Let me see him!" said a voice.

I recognized it instantly, and its tones went to my heart, and caused me to tremble so that I could have sunk to the ground with emotion.

It was Oliver who had uttered those words!

The gruff voice of Dan in reply rumbled through the house, but what he said was not audible to us.

"It is false," Oliver retorted, quickly. "He is here, and I will see him."

Again a denial, and again Oliver expressed his determination. Then we heard that Dan indulged in his "Hullo!" of surprise, and there was a scuffle. Oliver was forcing his way in.

Gasparo might have had his own motives for wishing to prevent a scene of violence. At this point, therefore, he quitted the room, letting the door close sharply with its spring behind him, and I could hear that he descended the stairs.

"See! He is here, himself!" I heard Oliver cry out.

"And what then?" retorted Gasparo; "what do you here?"

"You know that well enough," was the answer.

"Your own conscience tells you before I speak. You have someone hidden in this house!"

"Absurd!" cried the Italian.

"It is true; I have the surest proof of it. I will never leave until you restore her to my arms."

"What!" cried Gasparo, "do you suppose that you have the power of entering a man's house and carrying off its inmates at your pleasure? Not in this favoured country, my dear sir. Here, such things as search-warrants are the only keys to our citadels, and those must be granted on certain evidence which I question whether you are in a position to give. Even were the lady in question here—which is a mere guess on your part—you must show first that you have a right to interfere, and you must prove before a magistrate that she has interest in real or personal estate, that she is an heiress presumptive, and that she is forcibly detained from motives of lucre. There's an epitome of the law of abduction for you."

A provoking laugh followed these words. It seemed to sting the younger man to exasperation.

"I care nothing for your legal cobwebs," he exclaimed. "She is here, and I will have her. She is mine! She has been treacherously decoyed from us, and I defy you to detain her at your peril."

"And if I laugh at your defiance?"

"At least I will not quit this place till I have satisfied myself that she is here."

"Well,—you have no right to say this; but you are young, ardent, and you shall satisfy yourself that you are mistaken. Come! I will myself show you over the house."

What was I to think or to believe?

On the one side was the letter which should have convicted Oliver of gross perjury, on the other side there was this visit in search of me.

Of me?

No: it might not be so. If the letter had fallen into Gasparo's hands might not the person to whom it was addressed be in his power?

The thought seemed to paralyze me.

I heard the footsteps as Gasparo conducted the intruder over the house—I heard the opening and shutting of doors—passages were traversed, and odd nooks and corners peered into—and at last they drew near. I could tell that they were on the other side of the wall. The clothes Oliver wore brushed against the hidden door. They passed it—and from that fact I gathered that it was I of whom they were in search.

Desperate, maddened at the idea, I screamed out:

"Oliver! Oliver! I am here!"

My voice rang through the room—through the house as it seemed—then died away in utter silence. And that silence was broken only by the clang of the house-door as Oliver departed.

(To be continued.)

KENMORE.

CHAPTER V.

Of the retainers who had been collected in the lower hall only eight of them were really fit for service. Three were too old to stand up against fierce blows, while one was suffering with sickness. But the eight who were able showed no disposition to shrink from the proposed attack. They saw very plainly that if they remained where they were they must soon be exposed to attack from the enemy, and they preferred to take the open court for the conflict.

"It seems a little hard that Thorwald should be away with our best men at just this time," said the earl, as he and Aldred moved along the corridor together.

"Why did he take them?" asked our hero. "What use could he have for such company on a mere business trip?"

"Oh, the men were anxious to visit the capital, and Thorwald seemed full as anxious to gratify them."

Atholbane appeared for the moment to have forgotten the present danger to himself and his castle. His head was bowed, his steps slackened; and the pole of his axe dragged upon the pavement.

"We had better make haste, my lord."

The earl started, as though from a dream, and in his blind haste he ran against his companion with a force sufficient to crowd him against the wall.

"Bless me!" he cried, as he gained full control over himself, "I am dreaming. I was for the moment thinking more of the danger than—"

He stopped suddenly, as though he had commenced to say something that had better remain unsaid, and presently added:

"We have work enough before us to engage our attention for the present."

As he spoke they reached the door at the end of the corridor.

Aldred had been there before, and removed all the bolts save one; so all that now remained was to draw the single bolt near the knob and swing the door open.

"I think we are ready," said Atholbane, with his hand upon the knob.

The only response was a fierce clenching of their weapons by his followers, and in a moment more the way was opened.

The Knight of Lanark was the first to reach the parapet.

An angle of the keep shut most of the marauders from his view; but he could hear the crashing of the heavy beam, and he could see, by the position of a few of the rascals, that they were anticipating a speedy entrance to the stronghold of the castle.

The earl was quickly by his side, and when they saw that their followers had emerged from the corridor they closed their vizors, and leaped down the terrace.

"Heaven and Saint Michael!" shouted Aldred.

"Heaven and Kenmore!" answered the men-at-arms, as they rushed on after the two knights.

Those of the marauding Danes who were battering at the gate dropped the beam and grasped their spears; but before they could make the change three of their number had fallen.

Two had gone down beneath the axe of Aldred, and one had sunk beneath a blow from the earl.

Our hero's object was to reach the robber chieftain, but that individual had crouched away behind his followers, where he stood as though stunned and perplexed by this unlooked-for movement.

Both the knights seemed bent upon the same object, but they found themselves surrounded by the marauders, who had by this time recovered from the surprise, and they found plenty of work nearer at hand.

The men-at-arms did well; but Atholbane and Aldred dealt death at every stroke.

Their own bodies were protected by their armour, and so swiftly and surely did they ply their ponderous battle-axes that the enemy had no chance before them.

Two of the earl's retainers were slain, and when the Lord of Kenmore saw them fall he sprang to the deadly work with redoubled fury, and even the youth and vigour of Aldred could not overmatch him.

The points of the Highland spears, and the sharp heads of the javelins, were turned harmlessly aside by their steel harness, while the leathern doublets of their opponents, which might have turned off an arrow, offered no resistance to the keen edges of those two battle-axes.

In a little while those of the marauders who remained alive showed a disposition to retreat, and at this point Aldred looked once more for the stout chieftain.

"Ha! See there!" cried the earl.

The Knight of Lanark looked, and beheld the man whom he sought in the act of mounting a horse in the outer ballium; and at the same moment the rest of the marauders threw down their arms and ran.

Of course neither of the knights, hampered as they were, could give pursuit on foot; but Atholbane called to his retainers, and bade them stop the fugitives if they could.

One poor fellow, who had been slightly wounded in the knee, was caught and brought back, but the rest succeeded in reaching the shore of the lake, and making off with the only boat there was at hand, their chieftain having dashed off to the southward upon the only horse they had brought with them.

There were thirteen dead bodies in the court, eleven of the enemy and two of the men-at-arms—and when the earl had given directions for having them taken care of, he conducted his prisoner into the donjon, where he found the countess waiting for him. She was very pale, and had evidently been suffering much, but she seemed greatly relieved when she saw her husband safe.

She had witnessed most of the conflict from an upper bartizan, where she had kept Edwin for company. Several times the lad urged her to let him go down and take a spear, but she had wisely restrained him. After she had told her own experience, she asked the earl if he knew who it was that had attacked him.

"No," he replied. "At first I thought it might be Olaf, the Dane, but I was quickly forced to give up that idea. Whoever he was, he was a coward and a craven. Olaf would not have sneaked away from danger as did this man. He did not even show his face, and when I moved towards him for the purpose of inviting him to battle, he crouched behind his followers, and kept them between himself and us. And when he found that the day was going against him, he glided away, while yet some of his men were en-

gaged, and mounted a horse that he had brought with him into the outer court. But we may learn something from this prisoner."

The prisoner was a burly, brutish-looking fellow, not particularly ugly or particularly amiable. He sat with both his hands pressed upon his wounded knee, muttering curses, not loud but deep, over the misfortune that had brought him to his present situation. He was a Scot, of some northern tribe, as was evident from his wild garb and wilder manner.

"Look ye, sirrah," said the earl, "if you answer me straightly, all may be well with you. Give me such information as I seek, and I shall not take revenge upon you for what you have done. What was the object of your attack upon my castle?"

"My object was to obey the orders of my leader," replied the man, doggedly.

"And what was your leader's object?"

"I did not ask him."

"But you have some idea, nevertheless. Was it for plunder?"

"Perhaps so."

"Who was that leader?"

"I don't know."

"Was it Olaf?"

The man's eyes flashed fire.

"Is Olaf a coward and a dog?" he fiercely demanded. "It was not Olaf."

"But you must have known who led you if you were so willing to obey him."

"I know nothing," persisted the prisoner. "I only know that Olaf sent us out under this man, and we were forced to obey him, because in doing so we obeyed our own chieftain; but what was his name, or whence he came, I know not."

"You had promise of booty?"

"No."

"But you had hopes of obtaining booty?"

"No—it had been denied us."

"In mercy's name!" cried the earl, "you must know something more. You know something of your leader's purpose. What was it? Tell me what you think."

"I can only judge," answered the prisoner, "that he meant to capture you, and claim a heavy ransom."

Atholbane questioned the fellow some farther, but he gained no more information, and at length he gave the prisoner in charge to his warden, and directed that he should be closely and safely imprisoned, after which he went out into the court, where he found the workmen just coming in, and before noon matters were moving on within and about the castle as though nothing unusual had happened.

Several times during the forenoon, Aldred fancied that the countess was seeking an opportunity to speak to him privately, but he purposely avoided her.

If he had been asked why he avoided her, he might have been unable to give an answer that would have satisfied one who sought information, and even to himself he could only make the excuse that he did not like the woman.

He was naturally gallant and deferential to the gentle sex, and the light of a woman's smile was like sunshine to his soul, but he found no sunshine in the smiles of Lady Margaret. He felt uneasy when her gaze was fixed upon him, as though her dark eyes shot forth some baleful influence, and she gazed upon him as no woman had ever gazed upon him before.

Once when he caught her gaze thus fixed, and met her look with his own, she started and trembled as though with guilty emotion, but presently afterwards, as he could tell by the shudder that crept to his heart, she was watching him again, and this time he was forced to leave the room.

Why was it? For the life of him he could not tell. When she addressed him she did so most kindly, and in gentle tones, and yet even her speech grated harshly upon his ear.

At length, however, while the earl was busy with the masons, the countess gained a place for her hand upon the young knight's arm, and led him to a seat.

"Sir Aldred," she said, with a smile, "you must not shun me as though you feared me."

"Indeed, lady—"

"Oh, I understand. You fancy that I should stand upon the dignity of my rank, but that is not the way I treat my husband's honoured guests. And, moreover, if I were even so inclined, the services which you have rendered would remove all such barriers."

The voice was kindly and persuasively pitched, and there was a smile upon the woman's face, but the eyes were fixed upon him with a searching, piercing glance that troubled him. With an effort, however, he so far overcame the strange feeling as to be able to meet her gaze without flinching.

"Lady, I am grateful for your kind consideration,

and I hope I may continue to merit it. At all events, it shall be my earnest endeavour so to do."

"I can assure you of one thing," pursued the countess, still smiling, but with a smile that did not reach her eyes; "if you do not continue to receive my kindest regards, it shall be no fault of mine. But, my brave knight, I have a strong desire to know how you passed last night. Do not accuse me of curiosity. I think you spent the night in the—the—"

"In the Ghost's Tower," said Aldred, finishing the sentence for her.

"And as I find you alive and well to-day, I judge that you were not harmed."

"I assure you, lady, I suffered no harm whatever."

"You are, perhaps, aware," continued Lady Margaret, without seeming to notice the evasiveness of the last answer, "that these apartments are the best in the castle, and that they rightfully belong to me; and hence I am very anxious to know why I cannot occupy them."

"I thought you knew, lady, that they had been reported as haunted."

"Oh, certainly, I knew all that; but is it so? Did you see anything? did you hear anything?"

"I heard the voice of the storm, and it sounded dismal enough in that old tower."

"And what did you see?"

"I saw nothing calculated to excite either fear or terror; and my dreams, if I had dreamed at all, would, I am sure, have been very pleasant ones."

"Then your sleep was not disturbed?"

"Not in the least, lady. After my eyes were closed in slumber, I knew no more until the morning's sun was well up."

"You mean to sleep there again, Sir Aldred?"

"If it be agreeable to you and the earl."

"I, for one, should like to have you," said the countess, quite eagerly. "It is not impossible that the ghostly visitants have departed. I hope it may prove so."

"Have you ever seen them, lady?"

Lady Margaret answered with a shudder, and with a strange fluttering of tone:

"Yes, I was the first—the first of the present family—to be visited. Oh! I can see her now as I saw her then—so pale! so deathly!"

"It was the ghost of a woman, then?"

"Yes; she stood by the bedside gazing down upon me. I saw her as plainly as I see you at this moment, for I had left my lamp burning. I cried out in terror and she disappeared—melted away into thin air."

"Was she clad in white?"

"No—in deepest black. She came again and again, and finally I had to abandon the apartments. Others have tried to sleep there since, but none have succeeded. Only the spirit of the woman appeared to me, but to others the ghosts of men have presented themselves—the ghosts of one or two of those monks who were murdered here long, long years ago."

At this point Edwin entered the apartment, and our hero was glad enough to have the conversation broken in upon, for he had borne the gaze of those two eyes until he felt that he could bear it calmly no longer. During all the time that she had been talking, the countess had not once removed it from him, but had seemed bent upon analyzing each particular lineament of his features. In fact, the knight thought it not impossible that she had kept up the conversation more for the purpose of studying his face than of gaining intelligence of the ghosts.

What could it mean?

Towards the middle of the afternoon the earl drew Aldred's arm through his own, and walked out upon the parapet. When they had reached the bastion nearest the western tower they stopped, and the host let fall his arm and grasped his companion by the hand.

"Aldred," he said, with deep fervour, "yesterday you saved the life of the only child I have to love—the only stay and hope of my declining years—and to-day you have saved my all; for without your assistance those villains could never have been overcome. In return, you must allow me to take you thus by the hand and pledge you the love and faith of a brother. In sunshine and in storm, through good report and through evil report, I will stand by you and cleave unto you. My house is yours for a home always, and no breath of calumny shall ever move me from the friendship thus plighted. What more can I do?"

The Knight of Lanark wiped a tear from his eye, as he replied:

"You can accept my pledge of brotherhood in return, and with it my faith and love."

"I am the elder brother," said the earl.

"And I the younger," added Aldred.

"And," pursued Atholbane, solemnly, "if the time shall ever come when fate bids me draw my sword against thee, I will break the blade in twain and cast

the fragments from me ere my hand shall guide the fated blow! It is a heavy compact, but I fear not to make it."

"It must be the hand of fate that hath led me thus far," responded Aldred; and I recognize it as the will of heaven. I have given up one home to find another. My lord, henceforth, while we both live, I devote myself to thy service."

"Amen!"

It was a deep and solemn voice, yet soft and melodious, and seemed to come from one of the bartizans above them. The earl started and grasped his companion by the arm.

"Aldred, did you hear?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Ah—you do not comprehend. You are calm and unmoved because you think some human voice bore that solemn utterance to our ears. We are directly beneath the eastern wall of the Ghost's Tower."

"I was aware of it, my lord."

"And you heard that voice?"

"Yes."

"And did you think it came from human lips?"

Aldred had once made up his mind that he would not tell to the earl what he had seen and heard in the chambers of the tower—that he would not tell him until he had made some farther discovery; but his relations towards his host had changed since then, and he now felt that the faith of the new-plighted brotherhood required that he should keep nothing back.

"My lord," he said, after a little reflection, "before we speak farther upon this subject I must caution you against betraying me to the countess. She has questioned me touching what I saw and heard in this tower; and, though I told her no untruth, yet I purposely led her to believe that I had met with nothing unusual; and I would not like that she should know I had kept any intelligence from her."

"Trust me, Aldred. You did perfectly right—you did as I should have asked you to do had I been consulted before the countess spoke with you. But—you did see something?"

"I did, my lord; and the voice that has just spoken 'Amen' spoke more plainly still to me last night."

And thereupon the Knight of Lanark went on to tell to his host just what he had seen in the blue chamber, and what he had heard after he had retired.

"And you were not afraid?" said Atholbane.

"No," replied Aldred. "I had no thought of fear."

There is an old legend that tells us how a certain youth, of exceeding beauty, fell in love with the reflection of his own face which he saw in the clear water. If there was any one emotion in my soul more persuasive than another, it was of love for that pale sweet face. Not such love as warms the heart of the true knight towards his mistress, but that other love which inspires the heart with awe and holy reverence—a love all pure and spiritual, with nothing sensual in its nature, and which gives forth no fire that can kindle the flame of jealousy. If the poor soul is in suffering, heaven grant that I may be the humble instrument of her redemption. No, no, my lord, I have no fear of such a ghost."

Atholbane walked to the extreme verge of the bastion, and when he came back he was pale and agitated.

"Aldred, you and I will watch together to-night."

"I must see for myself."

"Have you never seen it, my lord?"

"I have never seen the woman's face. I have seen the dim, dusky form flitting away in the gloom; and I have heard sobs and moans. Oh, heaven! what can it be?"

"Have you never formed any opinion upon the subject?"

The earl's whole frame shook as he replied:

"I dare not think upon it. Let us say no more now. I am glad that you did not tell the countess. And, my brother, for the present let this matter rest between thee and me."

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN night came, according to arrangement, the earl accompanied Aldred to the Ghost's Tower, where he meant to keep watch until morning. Towards midnight, our hero awoke his host, who had fallen asleep in his chair, and asked him if he would watch.

"What have you seen?" asked Atholbane.

"I have seen nothing, and I have heard nothing. You told me to awaken you if you fell asleep, and I have done so! but you can sleep on if you wish."

"No, no—I prefer to watch. Go you to your bed, and I will take your place. I will call you if anything occurs."

Aldred did not believe that the pale presence would manifest itself.

He did not express the opinion to the earl, but he felt in his soul as though it were unkind for two stout knights thus to hang upon the haunt of the beautiful spirit.

He almost felt ashamed of the lack of gallantry displayed by such conduct, and he fancied that he could see that pale, sweet face turned reproachfully upon him.

However, he left his host in the blue chamber, and sought his pillow, where he very soon fell asleep.

Meantime Atholbane sat close by the shrine which supported the cross, and upon which, also, the lamp stood.

He had brought with him an old Saxon book of chronicles, the vellum leaves of which had grown yellow with age; and as he sat there pouring over the quaintly illuminated pages his attention was attracted by a slight shuffling sound at the opposite side of the room, and upon looking in that direction he saw, standing within the folds of the heavy tapestry, the figure of a man, clad in a monkish habit of gray cloth, with a rope girded about his loins.

The upper part of the face was covered by the overhanging of a black cowl, while the lower part was enveloped in a beard of snowy whiteness that reached almost to the waist.

"Atholbane," spoke the presence, in grave, measured tones, "You have need to watch, but not here. The Knight of Lanark may be trusted with your very life."

The tapestry fell back to its place, and the figure disappeared. The earl, as soon as he could collect his startled senses, arose from his chair and hurried to the place where he had seen the strange presence. He lifted the tapestry, thinking that he might see it again, but only the bare wall, smooth and solid, met his gaze. He had turned to call Aldred, when he beheld the youthful knight approaching him.

"Ah, my lord, have you seen her?"

"I have seen something, Aldred. Take you the lamp and let us search."

They searched every nook and corner of the chamber, and then went into the bathing-room beyond, but nowhere could they find any clue to what they sought.

"Aldred, it was not a woman I saw. It was a man—a monk—clothed in gray, with a silvery beard that reached to his waist. His look was grave and solemn, and his voice was in keeping therewith."

"Then he spoke to you?"

"Yes."

And the earl repeated the words he had heard.

"Indeed, my lord, I know not what may be the meaning of this, but I do know that the mysterious presence spoke the truth so far as I am concerned."

Atholbane walked slowly and thoughtfully to the bed, and sat down upon a chair by its side.

"Aldred," he said, removing his hand from his brow, and looking up into his companion's face, "what think you of this?"

"Perhaps I do not understand the object of your question," returned our hero.

"I mean, what think you of the character of these mystic visitants? Are they really spirits that have passed from the body—that have met with the transition which we call death?"

"By my faith," answered Aldred, promptly and frankly, "I am forced to the belief that they are. I have reflected much upon the subject within the last four-and-twenty hours, and I can see nothing impossible or improbable in such a thing. Wise men in all ages have held the belief that the spirits of the departed could, under certain circumstances, revisit the scenes of their earthly life, and if I am not mistaken the sacred traditions of all religious sects make record of such visitations. And, above all else, I cannot flatly dispute the evidence of my own senses. What's your opinion, my lord?"

"I am of your opinion, Aldred. If you please to call such things ghosts, then we have seen them, and I am not inclined to disobey the injunction which I have this night received. Without stopping to inquire into the justice or reasonableness of such a demand, I am willing to leave you to do the watching in this tower. I have need to watch, but not here! Where am I to watch, and what? My brother, can you tell me?"

The Knight of Lanark shook his head.

"I wish I could answer you to some purpose, my lord, but I am as yet in almost total ignorance of your private and public affairs. The warning may have had reference to something connected with the attack of the marauders, and it—"

"Never mind, Aldred," interrupted the earl, with a wave of the hand. "I cannot say that at the present time I have even a suspicion of any threatened danger, though heaven knows I have trouble enough. But I shall watch—I shall watch elsewhere, and to you I give the mystery of this tower, to solve it if you can."

Atholbane offered to remain where he was until morning, but his companion urged that he should seek his own apartment, and find rest.

Our hero thought to himself, after the earl was gone, that the plot was thickening. If he had ever doubted the existence of ghosts, he doubted not now, and he certainly had reason to believe that there was something more in these ghostly visitations than a simple desire on the part of the ghosts to wander about their old haunts. Touching the connection of these mysterious events with the affairs of his host, he could as yet form no opinion, though he felt sure that their connection was all in that direction.

"I will watch and wait," he said to himself, "and if there be any danger hanging over this house, may the fates in mercy avert it."

Having spoken thus, he arose and drew back the curtains of the bed, and smoothed down the pillow; but before retiring he concluded to take a look into the blue chamber, the door of which had been closed when he and the earl came out.

He did not take the lamp, and he was not a little surprised, upon pushing open the door, to find a dim, ghastly glare pervading the apartment. There was no lamp or torch to be seen, but from the sombre tapestry issued a grave-like glimmer, just rendering visible the furniture of the place.

As he stepped over the threshold, he saw a dark figure arise from the mat before the shrine, where it had been upon its knees. It was the figure of the female he had seen before, and he caught just one glance at the pale, beautiful face, as it passed on towards the inner wall. He spoke, but received no answer. He took another step forward, and the ghastly glimmer went out, and with it disappeared the mystic presence from his view. He followed it no farther.

He waited until he was sure it had gone, and then he returned to his chamber, and threw himself upon the bed. The few hours' sleep which he obtained were sweet and refreshing, and he dreamed no unpleasant dream.

In the morning he found the earl in the court, and Edwin was with him.

"Dear father," cried the boy, as the three mounted the parapet, "when is the tournament to be?"

"In two weeks, my boy."

"Oh, I wish it would come sooner; I am so anxious to see brave deeds done. I think our good Aldred will bear away the prize. Don't you think he will, father?"

The earl smiled at his son's earnestness.

"I think he deserves to win it, at all events," he replied.

"You forget," said Aldred, laying his hand upon the youth's head, "that the best knight of Scotland will be there, and some stout English knights to boot."

"And who is better than you?" demanded Edwin, seriously.

Aldred's answer was a faint smile and a shake of the head.

"I don't believe there are any," pursued the lad. "My brother Thorwald thinks he is the best knight of the realm, but I don't believe it. When you and he meet, I shall look to see him go down. Oh, I hope you will unhorse him."

"Edwin!"

The boy did not heed the interruption, nor did he observe the sudden quiver of the lips as his father spoke his name.

"As I live, father, I do not believe that Thorwald is a truly brave man. Brave men do not boast so much."

"Thorwald is not very boastful, my boy."

"But when he does boast, he does so in a way which is not very pleasant to me," asserted the lad, in a determined manner, "and I am very sure it would do me good to see him—"

"Hush, my son. Here comes your brother now."

"Thorwald," said the Lord of Kenmore, after he had greeted his step-son, "let us present to you Sir Aldred, the Knight of Lanark, who has come to pay us a visit."

"I bid the gallant knight a welcome to Kenmore with all my heart," responded Thorwald, and as he spoke he gave his hand to the visitor.

"I have heard of you, Sir Aldred," he continued, "and I have often thought I should like to meet you. Will you remain long with us?"

"I cannot tell how long," answered our hero.

"You are at liberty to remain as long as you wish?"

"Yes."

"Then never fear but that we shall detain you a long time. I think we can make your stay agreeable."

Aldred bowed his acknowledgment of the implied kindness, and then the party returned towards the keep.

"Have you been to breakfast?" Thorwald inquired.

"No," replied the earl. "It is early yet."

"Nevertheless," cried the step-son, "I have ridden from Seone since I came from my bed, and you may safely believe I am hungry."

"I looked for you yesterday, Thorwald."

"And I intended to return yesterday; but I accompanied some of my friends upon a hunting excursion, and we did not get back in season."

Thorwald was thirty years of age, tall and muscular, with a low brow, a broad, compact, heavy face, the eyes deep-set and piercing—the nose and chin in perfect keeping with the high and prominent cheekbones.

His hair was black and long, but his beard, of the same raven hue, was closely and evenly cut. Take him all in all, Thorwald was a gallant-looking knight, and there were many noble dames in Scotland who would have called him handsome, and with them his superciliousness would have passed for proper pride and brave bearing.

Though he may have taken some of his mental characteristics from his mother, yet, physically, he had inherited from his father so clearly a Norman estate that no one unacquainted with his parentage could have supposed that he had Saxon blood in his veins.

When the party had entered the keep Aldred saw Lady Margaret as he had not seen her before. As she embraced her dark-faced son all the pride and love of the mother was manifest, and she showed that, for him, at least, her heart could grow warm and sympathetic.

After breakfast, while the countess had drawn Thorwald away, and while the earl was busy with the returned men-at-arms, Edwin approached our hero's side and took his hand.

"Good Aldred," he said, in a low, earnest tone, "did you observe how my mother met Thorwald?"

"I saw it," replied Aldred.

"Don't you think she loves him?"

"I think she does."

"Should you think, from what you have seen, that she loves me as well?"

"You have not been away from home as Thorwald has," answered the knight, evasively.

Edwin shook his head.

"Ah," he said, significantly, "you don't wish to tell me what you think. Where has Thorwald been? What danger has he met? None. He has simply been on a visit to the capital, and he has had a score of stout knaves to keep him company, and give him protection in case of need. How was it with me when I came home from the lake? She knew, when she met me, that I had come from the very verge of a watery grave."

"Hush, Edwin. You do wrong to speak thus to me."

"No, no," cried the boy, grasping the knight's hand more tightly. "Do not tell me that. I love you, and I want you to love me; and I want you to sympathize with me."

"My dear boy, you know I love you; and it is because I love you that I would not have you dwell upon such a subject."

The pale youth shook his head solemnly and sadly.

"I am a poor, sickly boy," he said, "and my mother is not proud of me, as she is of her eldest son. But," and his eye brightened as he spoke—"my father loves me; and with his love, and with your love, I suppose I ought to be content. But tell me, Aldred, how do you like my brother?"

"I cannot tell yet," replied the knight. "I have hardly seen him."

"But you have looked into his face, and you have heard his voice."

"Ah, Edwin, we should not pass too hasty judgment upon our fellows."

(To be continued.)

ZEHRA.

CHAPTER V.

"HOLD, Moor! Tell me where is my master."

"Take care how you handle your sword, good Pedro. You might hurt somebody."

"San Jago bless me. May I be roasted alive on St. Lawrence's gridiron, if I didn't fear that you were gone."

"Not quite," said Charles, with a laugh, as he entered the room and threw off his Moorish cap and mantle.

"But bless me, Sir Charles, it's long after midnight. Where have you been?" uttered the honest esquire, who stood in his night-clothes. "I got up only a few minutes ago, and something put it into my head to come and see if you were safe. I saw your cap and

cloak here, and I feared some of the Moors had carried you off."

"No, no, Pedro; I have only been enjoying a short walk by moonlight. I wouldn't disturb you, for I knew that you were fatigued, and that you love your sleep."

"I don't love my sleep so well but that I can attend my master; and if he knows when he's safe he won't walk much alone after dark."

"Is there danger?" asked the knight, in a light, merry tone.

"More than you wot of, perhaps," returned Pedro, with much earnestness. "Let me tell you that the Alcalde won't forgive you for having beat him in the lists. And there's more, too."

"Ah!" uttered the knight, becoming more serious as he saw the earnestness of his follower.

"Yes, I believe you are narrowly watched."

"By whom?"

"By emissaries of the Alcalde."

"Pooh!"

"San Dominic, Sir Charles, I believe I tell you the truth."

"And for what should they watch me?"

"Perhaps they suspect we are here for no good purpose."

"Then let them suspect, and let them watch, too. They will see nothing to help them. My mission can be performed without much show."

"I think it will prove the blind man's mission, after all," said Pedro.

Charles looked into his esquire's face for a moment, and then he placed his hand upon his brow.

"Pedro," he said, at length, "I hope I shall succeed. For the sake of Leon and Castile, I hope so."

"And for your own sake, too, my master."

Again Charles of Leon placed his hand upon his brow, and for some moments he dwelt in his own thoughts. Pedro watched him narrowly, and he was not a little puzzled at his master's manner.

"Go seek your rest again, Pedro," said the knight, as he turned towards the dressing-table.

The faithful esquire obeyed without remark; but when he reached the door, he turned and looked back upon his master. There was a look of anxiety in his countenance, and his lips moved with his thoughts as he passed out.

After Pedro had gone, the count sat down to his dressing-case, and drawing forth from his bosom a roll of parchment, he opened it, and began to look over its contents by the light of the lamp his servant had left.

He read it half through, and then letting go of its corners he allowed it to roll up of its own accord, while he leaned back in his chair and gazed vacantly into the space before him.

"I believe Pedro tells me the truth," he said to himself. "The Alcalde is surely my enemy, and I may yet make him doubly so. Yet there can be no danger, for they will not dare to touch me without strong provocation. I will perform my mission, if possible, and when I return to Leon—"

The young Christian hesitated in his speech, and arose from his seat. His thoughts were upon Zehra, and he dared not give them utterance. He took up the parchment, and as he gazed upon it his features trembled.

"To both these deeds my knightly word is pledged," he said, as he placed the roll once more in his bosom. "Yet they need not clash—they cannot. Zehra—beautiful, lovely girl—with you I will keep my faith. Let the danger come—and it may come from Leon as well as here—but I can face it for you."

It was but a few moments after Charles had put the parchment in his bosom, and just as he was thinking of seeking his couch, that he heard a sound outside of one of his windows.

There was a broad verandah around the building on a level with the floor upon which was the knight's apartment, and Charles thought it might be someone merely passing the window.

In a moment there was a dark shadow thrown across the floor, where the moonbeams lay, and upon turning he saw the figure of a man outside of the window. He started back to the table where he had laid his sword, and as he grasped its hilt the window was thrown open, and the stranger stepped into the apartment.

"Put up your weapon, Charles of Leon," said the new comer. "I am far from meaning you harm."

"You choose a strange time for a visit, at all events," said the knight, holding his sword in his hand. "And there is a door to my room, too."

"Never mind the time, or the mode of my entrance, sir knight. Do you not recognize me?"

"Abdalla?" uttered Charles, as he now recognised in his visitor the lame man whom he had picked up from the roadside, and whom he had seen once since at the tournament.

"Yes," returned the Moor. "I told you when I

first saw you that we might never meet again, but you see that we have met notwithstanding."

Charles gazed upon his visitor with no little degree of curiosity and wonder, and instinctively he let his sword settle back into its scabbard.

"There is a seat at your disposal," said the knight, "and if it would please you I would hear your business."

"My business is but little, Sir Charles, and before I speak of it I must assure you that I come as no spy upon you. What passes between us is sacred with us. I know that you have come to Granada with some sort of a mission from King John of Leon and Castile. You need not start. Now, dare you tell me what that mission is?"

"I dare tell, but I shall not."

The Moor smiled.

"You own that you have a mission, then?"

"I have not owned it, nor have I contradicted you."

"Very well—let it pass. I think not that you would have travelled so far without an object."

Charles eyed his visitor uneasily. There was something in the Moor's look that half awed and half puzzled him. On the present occasion Abdalla looked the same as he did on the morning when the Christian had met him on the road; but yet Charles could see that he was deeply disguised.

There was a look of more than common intelligence in his countenance, and his eyes themselves spoke a volume of character. One thing, more than all else, however, moved Charles with a sort of distrust. The Moor seemed uneasy and anxious.

His glances were quick and varying, and the least movement of the vines that grew up about the windows caused him to start with half-developed fear.

"Charles of Leon," continued the Moor, after a moment's silence, "I am going to ask you an important question. I, too, am a knight, and upon my knightly honour I swear that your answer, whatever it may be, shall not pass from my lips. I have reason to believe that you are here on secret business. Now, will your king pursue this thing with the sword, if necessary?"

"Upon my faith, sir, you ask me a curious question," returned the Christian.

"And I have a curious reason for asking it," said the Moor.

"You display but little wit, at all events. You know me—know my rank, station and title, and profess, even, to know my very business; while I know nothing at all of you—not even your name, for that matter."

As the Christian knight ceased speaking he was struck by the change that came over the Moor's countenance. His eyes sparkled with a fierce lustre, his lips were compressed tightly over his pearly teeth, and his brow grew dark.

"Rank! station! name!" he uttered, in thrilling accents. "Charles of Leon, I have none! I have only my honour left to me, and that I will keep. I have reason for asking the question. Will King John send an army if you should fail?"

"You ask me that which I cannot answer," returned Charles, gazing with growing interest upon his strange visitor.

"If you know, I implore you to tell me," urged Abdalla.

"Look ye, Moor," said the Christian; "you seem to know not what you are asking of me. Here am I, a stranger in your city, perhaps with spies already upon my movements, looked upon with distrust by your Alcalde, and known to be an adherent of a government which has heretofore been hostile to the Moslem. Now, with what reason can you ask me such a question, and expect that I should answer it?"

The Moor looked troubled.

"I confess," he returned, "that my question may seem out of place; but your thoughts could be no more safe in your own bosom than they might in mine."

"That is not the way I generally regard important secrets. But I will tell you the truth. King John will not send an armed force to Granada. He has as much as he can do to look out for his troubles at home. You should know that the holy brotherhood of Leon are giving him trouble enough. Whatever may be my business here, I have nothing to do with your government or its affairs, nor will my king do it either."

"Then I have nothing more to ask of you," said the Moor, while a disappointed look settled upon his features.

"But I have a question to ask of you," said Charles. "You say you know the business that has brought me here. I should like to know how you obtained your information."

"By my simple knowledge of facts that are in existence."

"Ah," uttered the Christian, with a slight start, a look of anxious interest manifesting itself on his fea-

tures the while. "Could you then give me information? Know you what I seek?"

"I think I do."

"What?"

"I cannot tell you that till you confirm me in my belief of what you seek."

Charles of Leon felt almost sure that the Moor was but acting the spy upon him. To be sure the Moslem's countenance gave denial to such a supposition, but yet the count would not trust him.

"I don't think I shall need your assistance," he said, after a few moments of thought.

"I may have no assistance to render you. In fact, I have none to offer," returned Abdalla, as he gathered his mantle about him and arose from his seat. "I sought you because I had a faint hope that John of Leon and Castile would have had the daring to have pushed his mission with the sword, or at least to have threatened that thing."

"And I assure you he has no such intention."

"I believe you."

"Sir Moor, methinks you can have no very great love for Granada."

"Love for Granada!" repeated Abdalla. "Ah, sir knight, you cannot read my soul as you can your own. But I must leave you now. You will excuse me if I go the same way I came. We may meet again. If we do it will be a stranger meeting than this. Beware of the Alcalde!"

As the Moor spoke, he threw back the door-like sash of the window and stepped out upon the verandah, and in a moment he was gone.

Charles of Leon pondered long upon the strange meeting. He had no fear of the Moslem, for he had taken care not to commit himself; but he could not help thinking that in some way Abdalla was acting the spy. He doubted if the Moor knew as much as he professed.

"He only said that to try me," said the young knight to himself, as he began to prepare for his couch. "The Moor can know nothing of the business that has brought me here. How should he? By my faith, I am not to be thrown off my guard in that way."

Ere long Charles laid himself down upon his couch, and that night his dreams were many and varied; and when Pedro came to awaken him in the morning, it seemed as though he had not slept at all.

CHAPTER VI.

IN one of the most luxurious apartments of the Alhambra sat Mohammed. Near him, upon a soft Persian lounge, sat a female whose costume showed her to be one of the wives of the Granadan monarch. She was still a young woman, though the bloom of her life had passed prematurely away.

There was beauty, too, upon her countenance—such beauty as the true husband should delight to honour—a beauty that had shed all its early bloom upon Mohammed's path, and now that it had turned upon its fading point it should have been loved more than ever.

It should have called forth that holy love of the soul which unites gratitude with reverence. That woman was Emima, the mother of Mohammed's only son. She had been weeping.

"Do you speak the truth?" she asked, with an evident attempt to suppress the feelings that were rising in her bosom.

"Most assuredly I do, Emima," returned the king.

"And do you mean to make Zehra your wife?"

"Yes."

"Mohammed, this is cruel; it is unjust. Have I not been faithful?"

"I have no fault to find on that score."

"And have I not ever loved you?"

"You have ever professed to."

"And you know I have; and now you would cast me away and put another in my place."

"It is my pleasure, Emima."

"Your pleasure? And have I grown so old and ugly that you can love me no longer?"

"Your beauty is fast departing."

"Oh, misery!"

"Don't take it so hard, Emima. I mean you no wrong. You have the same place in my palace as ever."

"The same place in your palace!" bitterly cried the woman. "Do you think I am a dog, that can be satisfied with a gilded kennel? No, Mohammed, I want your love—I want that place in your heart that belongs to me. You shall not take the Alcalde's daughter to your bosom."

"In truth, Emima, I shall exercise my own taste about that. I want none of your advice."

"Listen to me, Mohammed," cried Emima, starting up from her chair. "You know not what a woman can be, if you think to trifle with me thus. I have borne everything for your sake; for years have I been

true as heaven itself to you, and now I am to be thrown aside as useless rubbish; and, what is worse than all, another is to take my place. Another! Oh, Mohammed, do you realize the sting that pierces my soul at such a thought? and do you know the spirit you may call up?"

"Peace, woman!" uttered the king, slightly shrinking from the woman that had so long been his favourite wife, and whom he even now stood in some dread of should her anger be aroused.

"I cannot hold my peace till you have told me that Zehra shall not be your wife."

"She will be my wife."

"You have decided, then?"

"Most irrevocably."

"Then, Mohammed, take your own course," Emima spoke, in a tone of strange calmness, and, save the intense fire that burned in her large dark eyes, she showed little of passion. "Take your own course," she said, "and let me be cast from you; but as I have loved, so can I hate. The love that burns in my bosom knows no gradual cooling. If its lamp goes out it will freeze like the heaven-reaching crown of the Nevada, and you will be to me but as the being who has robbed me of life."

"Beware, Emima; beware that you use no threats to me."

"And what if I do threaten?"

"The executioner's cimeter is sharp."

Emima's countenance grew more pale, and her eyes flashed more brilliantly.

"I have not threatened you," she whispered, while she pressed her hand upon her bosom as if to still the tumult of her heart. You know me well enough to know that I can be as proud as you; but if you think another wife can live here you know me not as I am. Give me back your heart and let me know that I am your wife as I have been, and I will be all to you that you can wish."

"You know my decision," returned the king, in a stern tone. "Now leave me."

Emima turned away, and Mohammed saw not the look that rested upon her countenance. If he had seen it he would have trembled at its darkness.

The veins about her pale temples were swollen, the eyes were set with fearful brilliancy that had no sparkling in its intensity, and the fingers of her right hand seemed pressed through the quivering flesh of her bosom.

No breath seemed to move her—no impulse was apparent; but she looked as though her whole being was one vast thought that slumbered upon the verge of action. As she passed out from the apartment Mohammed sprang to his feet.

"By Allah," he exclaimed, "she takes it more seriously than I had thought; but she will forget it in time. She should not have grown old if she would have kept my love. Poo! She'll rest easy enough if I am but kind to her, and I mean not to be unkind. I have loved her, and I think she loves me even now; but Zehra is young and beautiful."

The last thought seemed to give Mohammed a pleasing turn of mind; but a shadow soon settled over his countenance. Though he had resolved to put away his long favourite wife, yet he feared her.

He feared that she might be more dangerous than he had at first imagined, for he knew that she was proud of spirit, warm and impulsive in her temperament, and that she possessed a will as strong as was his own.

But yet the Moslem king was not to be turned from his purpose. He had seen the beautiful Zehra, and he had resolved to possess her. To this end had he made Ben Hamed Alcalde of Granada, and to this end did he keep Ben Hamed in his office.

When Emima left the king's presence she went to her own apartment, and having sunk down upon her couch, she burst into tears. It was a long time that she wept, for the fountains of her heart were loosened.

She had loved Mohammed with her whole soul. He was the father of her child, and to him her young heart's affections had been given. It was no selfish love she had felt, but her feelings towards her royal husband had been of that warm, generous, noble character that all centre in the object loved. Mohammed had taught her to be proud, too, and now, in the moment of her love's crushing, that pride gradually arose above the ruins, and its torch was fearfully brilliant. The tears ceased to flow, and one after another they dried from her pale cheeks.

When she arose from her couch the only traces of weeping were in the swollen marks about the eyes. She looked still pale, but yet there was a hectic flush upon either cheek, and that pallor bore nothing of melancholy in its character. The lips moved not with the thought that was busy in her brain, but they seemed rather compressed to keep that thought from escaping.

She examined her features in the polished mirror that hung in her apartment, and when she turned



[ABDALLAH'S MYSTERIOUS VISIT TO THE KNIGHT.]

away she touched the bell-cord that was suspended near her.

A servant soon entered, and Emina ordered her to bring her a hood and mantle, and prepare to accompany her. While her attendant was gone, the woman went to her dressing-case, and from one of the drawers she took a small dagger. She examined its bright, keen point, and then placed it carefully in her bosom. In a moment more the attendant re-entered and proceeded to help her mistress dress.

"There, Mada—now follow me," said Emina, as she turned to leave the apartment. "Remember that you speak not of this to anyone, for I go in secret."

The maid bowed a silent assent, and followed her mistress as directed.

Emina took a private passage, and having passed to the basement of the palace, she made her egress through a small door that opened upon the hill in the rear.

The thick foliage shielded her from observation, and with quick steps she made her way down to the rapid Darro at a point where a narrow foot-bridge was thrown across the stream.

Having crossed this, she bent her steps towards the dwelling of Ben Hamed. She walked with a firm step, but quicker than usual, and there was more of masculine power in her step than Mada had ever before seen in her mistress.

The distance from the river to the dwelling of the Alcalde was not great, and when Emina reached the gardens, she entered the gateway and approached the building by the way that led to the women's apartments.

One of the female attendants obeyed her summons. The presence of the king's favourite wife was a powerful talisman, and without hesitation her demand to be shown to the apartment of Zehra was complied with, Mada, in the meantime, being ordered to remain behind.

Zehra was startled by the appearance of Emina, but she paid her due reverence, and humbly asked her pleasure. The visitor calmly dismissed the attendant, and then turning to Zehra she asked:

"Are we alone?"

"Yes," returned the girl, as she gazed wonderingly into the pale features of her visitor.

"Do I look well?" Emina continued, as she took a seat.

"Not very well, lady."

"But you do look exceedingly well. And you look beautiful, too."

Zehra tried to smile, but it was beyond her power. She was startled by Emina's strange manner.

"I was once beautiful," continued Mohammed's wife—"almost as beautiful as you."

"You are beautiful still," said Zehra.

"But not beautiful enough. Beauty should never fade."

"Alas! all things earthly must fade."

Emina started at the mournful manner of the young girl, and there was a perceptible softening of the expression upon her countenance; but it soon passed away, and all was cold again.

"Are you not a happy creature?" Emina asked.

Zehra only gazed upon her interlocutor in silence.

"You should be happy, for life opens a kind future to you," continued Emina. "When you are—Mohammed's wife, you will be happy."

"Oh! for kind heaven's sake, torture me not with—"

"Go on—go on," uttered the queen, drawing a quick breath.

"I can trust you—you will be kind—you will not betray me?"

"No—go on."

Emina spoke with energy, and she leaned forward to catch the words that might fall from the fair girl's lips.

"I trust my own sex will not turn against me," murmured Zehra.

"How? why?" quickly asked the queen, while her hand slowly moved towards her bosom.

"I cannot be Mohammed's wife. Oh! I cannot."

"Cannot? But the king loves you."

"No, no—he cannot love me. Only my beauty pleases him."

"Suppose he did love you?"

"Even then I could not be his. Oh, noble lady, you, who have a woman's heart, should know the secrets of the female soul. You should know what misery must be in that life-time that presents nothing upon which the heart can fasten in love."

Zehra hesitated, and then with a sudden movement she cast herself at the feet of the queen.

"Oh! perhaps you can save me. Perhaps you can persuade the king to let me be happy. Will you not?"

"I have little power over Mohammed. I think you might be happy in his company. He will be lavish of kind acts when you are once his youngest wife."

"Ah, noble lady, you can know little of kindness if you think as you speak. Could you be shut up for life in some dark, loathsome dungeon, where the light of day was for ever excluded—where noisome vapours and pestilential malaria clung about you—and there

treat as kindness any act of him who thus confined you?"

The expression upon the queen's countenance was gradually changing. Still she looked upon the beautiful girl with a burning eye.

"Mohammed will make you his wife," she said.

"No, no—he cannot."

"Ah, but he has power."

"Not to do that," returned Zehra, rising to her feet and throwing back the dark silken tresses that had fallen about her face.

"Yes, he has," whispered Emina.

"Hark," uttered Zehra. "Hear you that murmuring noise?"

"Yes."

"It is the dark, swift Darro. If Mohammed takes me for his wife, he will take me cold and lifeless from its rushing flood. Allah gives me so much of hope."

For a long while the queen gazed into the face of the girl before her. The stern coldness was all gone from her features, and her lips trembled with emotion.

"Zehra," she said, as she drew the trembling fair one to her bosom, "I know that you speak the truth, and I am almost happy, for I am saved a deed I tremble to commit. Tremble not, for you need fear no longer. Had I found you loving towards Mohammed you should not have lived to receive his embrace, but now you need not even fear him. I have loved the king most truly, and I swear by the Prophet that none other shall take my place of wife while I breathe the breath of life!"

As the queen spoke, she turned from Zehra and buried her face in her hands.

"Do not let this affect you so," kindly urged the young girl, laying her hand upon Emina's shoulder, and gazing up into her face.

"You are not a wife, Zehra," returned the queen, as she brushed a tear from her cheek. "You have not felt the crushing of your heart's whole love, and experienced the dark night that succeeds the setting of the sun of life. I have felt all this."

"Heaven rest you."

"Heaven may rest another first!"

Emina spoke this in a strange tone, and without waiting to observe its effects upon Zehra, she turned towards the door of the apartment. Silently she passed out from the room, and at the garden door she found Mada. As she glided away through the shrubbery she fervently murmured:

"Thank Allah, I return with a bloodless dagger."

Mada heard her not, for the words were but breathed into being.

(To be continued.)



[LORD WALDEMERE'S JEALOUSY.]

THE HOUSE OF SECRETS.

By LEON LEWIS.

CHAPTER XXVII.

I, under fair pretence of friendly ends,
And well-placed words of glossy courtesy,
Baited with reason not unpleasable,
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
And hug him into snare.

Milton.

To build my success upon his failure,
My happiness upon his misery,
This shall be my aim.

Anon.

LORD TEMPLECOMBE returned to Wycherly Castle on the afternoon of the same day on which he had left it to take his poor young wife to the Fens. He was in high good-humour at the success which had attended his efforts to rid himself of Natalie, and Sir Wilton Werner had little need to question him upon the subject. Nevertheless, with some curiosity, the baronet seized the first practicable opportunity to learn the particulars of his lordship's adventure.

This opportunity occurred before dinner.

The baronet had completed his toilet, and, finding some time must elapse before the advent of the dining hour, he crossed the corridor to Lord Templecombe's rooms, where he rapped for admittance, which was granted by the earl himself.

His lordship was not yet dressed, his form being draped in a dressing-gown, and his feet encased in slippers. His garments were strewn carelessly about, ready to be donned, and the scent of oils and perfumes pervaded the apartment.

"You are your own valet-to-day, Templecombe?" observed the baronet, carelessly, flinging himself into an arm-chair. "What has become of that prince of serving-men and confidants, Roke?"

"I was obliged to send him to town immediately on returning to the Castle."

"Your business could not be in better hands. Of course, it relates to the pretty little Natalie?"

"Yes," said the earl, briefly.

The baronet smiled, and leaned back, watching his friend through his half-shut eyes, as his lordship proceeded with his toilet.

Not another word was spoken by either, until the earl's elaborate toilet was completed, even to the diamond studs on his bosom and the graceful tie of his flay cravat.

Then his lordship drew a chair near to that of his friend, and exhibited an intention of becoming confidential.

"How did you like the Fens?" asked the baronet, by way of opening the conversation.

"It was both charming and horrible!" was the reply. "Charming as a residence for Natalie, and horrible in every respect to me. The girl likes it, though. She was entranced with the loneliness of the place, and that wide, open moor!"

"And the swamp?"

"To tell you the truth, I did not allow her to look upon that side of the dwelling. She gave a glance or two at the 'romantic river,' and remarked that we would have some delightful walks there, but that was all. It is the best place in the world for Natalie—so retired, and so lonely—"

"And so miasmatic!" interrupted the baronet, drily.

"Well, the air certainly is not very pure," said the earl, a little puzzled by his friend's manner. "But Natalie did not notice that fact. Your ancestors must have been odd people, Werner, to build a house on such a barren, unhealthy spot!"

"I am doing my best to counteract their eccentricities, as you must have seen. The house has not been repaired for ten years, although my agent represents that it has need of it. The solitude, barrenness, desolation, and miasma keep away all respectable tenants. I really believe I couldn't let the place except as a robbers' haunt, or a pirates' retreat! Still, all its faults are to you recommendations. It has another good point I have not mentioned!"

"What is that?"

"Its inmates are all short-lived!"

The earl moved uneasily in his seat, and looked intently at the carpet.

"The fact is not unknown to you, or unsuspected, at least, I see," remarked Sir Wilton, with a sarcastic smile. "If your Natalie is at all delicate, she will not survive her change of residence six months!"

"But the housekeeper has grown old there, and is as active as a young girl—"

"The housekeeper, Templecombe, has a constitution that thrives upon deadly poisons. Her longevity in that spot is nothing short of a miracle. Her children and grand-children all died at comparatively early ages, with a single exception. That exception, as my agent tells me, is a sickly, crazed girl, who cannot live many years in that atmosphere. As for old Elspeth, I believe pure air would kill her!"

"Natalie is delicate," said the earl, musingly.

"Then keep her at the Fens six months!"

The earl looked up, exchanging glances with his friend.

"I believe I will take your advice, Werner," observed his lordship, more at ease. "You may consider that the Fens is let for the year. Natalie thinks it belongs to me."

"It would have been better to tell her that you had hired the place. Old Elspeth is such a gossip that the truth cannot fail to come out. And if Natalie finds that you have deceived her in one thing, she will jump to the conclusion that you have deceived her in all!"

"I have no fears on that point," laughed the earl, proceeding to describe the deaf condition of the old housekeeper, and the false explanations he had given his young bride to prevent any suspicions of the truth from entering her mind.

"You have done well, Templecombe. I had no idea that you were such a genius!"

"I am satisfied so far with myself," returned his lordship, complacently. "If I could win Leopold as easily as I have disposed of Natalie! And I do not see why I should not!"

"That remark shows that you have under-estimated the state of affairs. It would be no easy task to destroy the devotion of two hearts like those of the Lady Leopold and Basil Montmaur, and the first step towards doing so is to estimate the task at its true value. Basil has the advantage of you in some respects—in what novelists term manly beauty, and in a fascination of manner, which no woman would find it easy to resist. This fact, I see, has been unsuspected by you. But you possess the advantage in wealth and rank, and if the Lady Leopold were but worldly minded, your advantages would outweigh those of Montmaur!"

The earl uttered an impatient exclamation, and exclaimed:

"As the Lady Leopold is not worldly minded, I am then to understand that she will never be induced to accept me?"

"By no means!" replied the baronet, carelessly.

"There can be no possible combination of circumstances which a resolute will cannot overcome. There is but one way by which you can supersede Montmaur in his lady's affections, and I will indicate to you the proper one. If you were to persecute her with attentions, your labour would be thrown away. If you were to vilify Montmaur, she would tell him all you said."

"Then I ought to get him away from the Castle, and make good use of his absence?"

"Not so, since that would but strengthen the Lady Leopold's affection for him! They have perfect faith and trust in each other at present. If that faith could be undermined, that trust destroyed, then you might hope to succeed to the place in your cousin's

heart that he would leave vacant; or she might be induced to bestow upon you her hand through motives of pique!"

"But how can I destroy her faith in him?"

"Your own fertile imagination must suggest the best course, Templecombe. Devote a little thought to the matter, and I am sure you will develop a plan that cannot fail of success. I shall watch your actions with much interest, and will suggest whatever improvements I can!"

With this the earl was obliged to be content.

But his friend had awakened new hopes within his breast, new resolutions within his perjured soul, and already he felt confident that Basil would be discarded by his betrothed, and that he would be elevated to Montmaur's present place.

"I have but one hint more to give, Templecombe," remarked Sir Wilton, arising from his chair. "Beware of Natalie! A wronged woman has always power over the wronger. Do anything rather than allow her to approach the Lady Leopolds! And now," he added, "shall we not proceed to the drawing-room?"

The earl assented, and, arm-in-arm, the friends descended, the baronet's last warning ringing in his lordship's ears.

A gay party was gathered in the magnificent salon, and not a member of it was gayier than its hostess, Miss Wycherly.

Attired in costly robes, whose rich and velvety shadows were relieved by sparkling diamonds, she had never appeared more handsome or more joyous.

Her features were animated, her smiles more frequent than usual, and her entire appearance was radiant.

With his pulses quickening at the sight, Sir Wilton made his way to her side, his countenance expressing his admiration for her.

Alethea received him more graciously than usual, and assailed him with gay badinage and the most delicate railery, lifting his usually cold heart to the seventh heaven of delight.

He did not notice, as she did, that Lord Waldemere was furtively regarding them from under his heavy brows with glances of restless fire, even while he carried on a conversation with the placid and unobservant Mrs. Braithwaite.

The younger members of the party grouped themselves together near one of the windows, engaging in eager discussion of plans of amusement, and Miss Wycherly and the baronet were left to themselves.

It is needless to say that Sir Wilton exerted himself to be agreeable to the lady of his affection, her unusual cordiality having inspired him with the wildest hopes.

When the dinner was announced it was he who conducted Miss Wycherly to the dining-room.

During the repast he was more than ever attentive to her, although his attentions were so unobtrusively bestowed that but one person beside their recipient noticed them.

That exception was, of course, the Marquis of Waldemere.

Dinner over, Sir Wilton gallantly conducted his hostess to the door, which he held open until she had passed out, and he then returned to dream over his wine.

The gentlemen found him an unusually thoughtful companion that day. He was generally full of wit and anecdote, doing more than his share towards making the after-dinner hour pleasant; but on this occasion he was nearly as quiet as Lord Waldemere himself.

Basil Montmaur was very temperate, and never sat late over his wine. Lord Waldemere drank little, and generally left the table at the same time with Basil, Lord Templecombe and Sir Wilton remaining longer.

But on that day the gentlemen arose at the same time, returning in a group to the drawing-room, where they partook of coffee with the ladies.

After coffee, the young people engaged in a discussion of tableaux and acting charades, subjects enough for an evening's amusement not having yet been decided upon. They were desirous of something new and singular, something that had not been seen every year at country houses, something that would give this particular entertainment a character of originality.

Lord Templecombe proved an able assistant to the young ladies, and Basil was invaluable, nature having given him a brilliant imagination and a ready memory.

Mrs. Braithwaite lent her aid, describing fancy-dress balls she had attended in her youth, and suggesting various characters, the costumes of which she could in part supply from her stores of Cashmere shawls and old lace.

"We shall need a large supply of flowers," said the Lady Helen Haigh. "It would be well, perhaps, to send our orders to town immediately, else we may fail in being supplied."

"The Castle gardens will supply all the flowers you can use, Lady Ellen," observed Miss Wycherly, who had been taking an active part in the discussion.

"But will your gardener spare them to us, Miss Wycherly?"

The hostess smiled assent.

"We would be Vandals to rob your conservatory too, Miss Wycherly, but I am to represent a tropical summer, and garden flowers cannot be used for that character. I must have exotics, and you must permit me to order those from town!"

"The character will be very appropriate to you, Lady Ellen," remarked Miss Wycherly, regarding the clear, brunette beauty of the young widow, "and exotic flowers will be needed. We have a great many of them, and I am sure that the Lady Leopolds will feel hurt if you do not use them freely!"

The lady of the Castle echoing her aunt's hospitable words, Alethea added:

"To put the question at rest without delay, I will examine the resources at our command. By the time you have settled upon some of the other representations, I will return with my report."

She arose, and Sir Wilton begged permission to attend her to the conservatory. The permission was gracefully accorded, but a quick and sweeping glance around the drawing-room showed Alethea that Lord Waldemere was not present to witness her graciousness.

The Castle was always brilliantly lighted at night, and the hostess, with her attendant, passed from the salon into a no less bright corridor—the grand hall of the Castle, with mosaic flooring, vaulted ceiling, lofty walls, and dimensions capacious enough for the accommodation of a small army of guests.

Passing down the length of this majestic apartment, from which opened reception rooms, library, &c., the baronet pushed aside one of the sliding doors at the end, and they found themselves in the conservatory.

This was no small repository for flowers, but a large and handsome apartment with three sides, and a roofing of the clearest French glass. Clusters of transparent porcelain lilies were arranged against the side nearest the dwelling, and among the flowers, and from the hearts of these mock flowers, ran out a tongue of flame, that produced a brilliant effect, and at the same time a light that reminded one of the rosy sunrise.

The flowers were arranged in pyramidal rows, with wide alleys between, and these converged to a beautiful fountain that stood in the centre, and sent up day and night its misty clouds of spray, that fell with musical murmur into the sculptured marble basin beneath.

The regularity of the design was broken here and there by graceful mounds, or by clumps of orange and other trees, that were in full blossom and fruitage at one and the same time.

There were also dwarf palms, and other tropical trees, bound together by a profusion of parasitic vines that ran from one to another in wanton luxuriance, suspending here and there tiny cups of perfume that looked like burning drops of fire.

As Miss Wycherly and Sir Wilton Werner entered this enchanted spot, the former noticed a dark figure seated in the shadow of a clump of bushes, in a far corner, and this figure she recognized as belonging to Lord Waldemere.

His attitude was drooping, but he looked up as the intruders advanced, and shrank back still farther into the gloom, as if desirous of remaining unobserved.

Pretending not to see him, Alethea wandered up and down the fragrant alleys, keeping up a running commentary upon the floral wealth around her.

At length she paused by the fountain, at no great distance from the marquis, and remarked, lightly:

"All the young ladies might assume the representation of a tropical summer, Sir Wilton, without impoverishing our conservatory. Did you notice the abundance we have of geraniums, fuchsias, magnolias, cannellias, and hosts of other brilliant flowers with unpronounceable names?"

The baronet answered in the affirmative, saying:

"The part chosen by the Lady Ellen would be very appropriate to you, Miss Wycherly. It is true that she is also a brunette, but if you will pardon me the comparison, she lacks the stateliness and magnificence that are so characteristic of yourself, and which would so well adorn the representation of a gorgeous and stately part!"

Sir Wilton had spoken impulsively and from his heart.

Perhaps his evident sincerity took away all falseness from his flattery, and Miss Wycherly did not frown or look coldly upon him, as he feared she would.

She bowed courteously and smiled, more because a pair of gloomy eyes were peering at her from the shadow of the vines than because she was pleased at the baronet's homage.

She had but little vanity, and a great deal of delicacy, and a remark upon the weather would have pleased her as well as an admiring comment upon her beauty, but she answered, pleasantly:

"The Lady Ellen has the advantage of me, Sir Wilton, in possessing four years more of youth. My four years' seniority seem to be more like fifty. It is a sad thing to feel old and weary while you are yet young, is it not?"

Her voice was so calm and even, her manner so unmoved, so pleasant, that the baronet fancied her in jest, and greeted her words with a laugh.

"It is the young alone who speak of feeling aged!" he observed, satirically. "But you, Miss Wycherly," he added, "will never grow old. You will be like Ninon de Lenclos, as lovely at the last as in the first flush of youth!"

"A pleasant prophecy, Sir Wilton. Upon what grounds do you base your prediction?"

"My conclusion was founded upon the fact that you have no cares, no sorrows, no troubles," answered the baronet, believing nearly all he said. "Your life is very fair and bright, glided with luxury, made joyful by the affection of your lovely niece, who is to you as a younger sister. With a life of such repose, what can bring wrinkles to that smooth brow, or rob those cheeks of their rounded contour? Care and illness and grief are the causes of beauty's decay, and if the deadly three are strangers to you, why should you ever fear a change?"

He asked the question triumphantly, as if it were self-evident.

Alethea sighed softly—so softly that even the stormy eyes that watched her did not notice it—and heaven alone knew that that sigh expressed a world of bitter anguish—such anguish as few hearts ever know!

And then she forced her lips to smile, and said, with a hidden sarcasm that might have made her guardian angel weep in tender pity:

"You are right, Sir Wilton. Why should I expect ever to grow old when I have no cares, no troubles, no illness? I think I shall look forward to an eternal youth, and I shall be content if my life always remain as sweetly serene as now!"

Her listeners, Sir Wilton and he who was concealed behind the heavy-blossoming vines, took her words in good faith.

But upon each they had a different effect.

The marquis's eyes looked out with more of a menacing gloominess, as if he would spring upon her.

The baronet plucked a rose from a rare little bush that bloomed monthly, and drew near the lady, saying, gently:

"You have my best hopes that it may prove so, Miss Wycherly. I wish that your life may prove as perfectly rounded and as fragrant with happiness as this rose with perfume. Will you accept it in memory of my hopes and wishes?"

The lady took the flower, attaching no importance to the gift, and then, conscious of the gaze upon her, fastened it in her belt, where it glowed like a great carbuncle.

Delighted with the reception of his gift, Sir Wilton hardly knew how to put into words the thoughts that thronged tumultuously to his lips.

He had never fancied himself beloved by the haughty woman beside him, and the thought now flashed upon his mind—what if he had been mistaken? What if the queenly Alethea had remarked his devotion to her and with pleasure?

Such a thing was not impossible—not even improbable.

He was not ill-looking, not old, not very poor; his name was ancient, his family unimpeachable. A Werner was not a very bad match for even an earl's daughter.

These thoughts surged into his mind, and scarcely knowing what he said, he stammered:

"To promote eternal youth, Miss Wycherly, there is nothing like that most glorious of the passions, love! It keeps the heart warm, lights up the eyes, makes the cheeks glow, and a smile play about the lips—for it is the essence of happiness!"

"You are straying from the subject, Sir Wilton," said Alethea, smiling. "And you speak like a dealer in cosmetics!"

"You will pardon me then, will you not? I cannot longer keep back the thoughts I have cherished. I must tell you, Alethea Wycherly, that I love you, and as I never loved before, I may be transgressing the rules of etiquette in telling you this while I am your guest, but I am more likely to have another opportunity soon. Will you be my wife?"

He looked down into her face with an eagerness

that showed that his cold, wordly heart was touched to the core, and that he loved her to the fullest extent of which he was capable.

Alethea started with surprise, conscious only of the eyes that glared at her from Lord Waldemere's covert, and blaming herself for having allowed the baronet to come to a declaration of his passion.

As she continued silent, Sir Wilton continued:

"May I hope from this silence, Alethea, dearest Alethea, that my love has found an echo in your heart?"

It trembled on Miss Wycherly's lips to reject him decidedly and on the spot. She did not love him, nor did she fancy that she did. She was annoyed at his proposal of marriage more than she would have cared to have known.

But Lord Waldemere glared fiercely at her through the vine-leaves, and so she answered:

"You have taken me by surprise, Sir Wilton. I would like a little time to consider your proposal—"

"As much time as you choose!" declared her delighted suitor. "You have given me hope, Alethea, for if you had not loved me you would have rejected me on the spot! I shall endeavour to reward you by a lifetime of devotion—if you accept me," he added, more awkwardly, as he remembered that she had not yet given herself to him.

"Had we not better return to the drawing-room?" asked the hostess, shrinking before the gaze of the hidden lord. "Our friends will be anxious to learn about the flowers!"

Sir Wilton bowed and conducted Miss Alethea from the conservatory. As they reached the door, she detached the rose from her belt, and dropped it, unobserved, into a flower-vase.

The lady and her suitor had left but a few moments, long enough to reach the salon, when a great cry came from Lord Waldemere's lips, and he sprang up, rushed to the door at the end of the room, and dashed out into the night.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Win her with gifts, if she respect not words;
Dumb jewels often, in their silent kind,
More quick than words do move a woman's mind.
Shakespeare.

Hope
Is such a bait, it covers any hook.
Jonson.

NATALIE's second day at the Fens was spent much in the same way as the first. She investigated the upper rooms which she had not already examined, selected a few pictures for her own parlour, and rambled over the moor, plucking the purple heather-blossoms. The weed-grown garden, too, claimed her attention, and she found in it many choice flowers and shrubs that had run wild with neglect.

Seating herself upon the porch with paper and pencil in hand, the earl's young wife made out a list of requirements for house and garden, that seemed to her commensurate with the wealth of Lord Templecombe, but which would have seemed to him very modest indeed.

The list included servants and everything necessary to a gentleman's country establishment, but was scarcely imposing enough for a wealthy nobleman.

She then drew a plan for the garden as she desired it to be, with a semi-circular drive and two great gates, with other gates for her own use when she set out upon the rambles she planned, with alleys shaded by trees and bordered by beds of flowers, and all other improvements she could devise.

There were trees enough already for her design. Two straight rows of poplars ran from the front gate up to the porch, a beautiful linden-tree reared itself before the windows of Natalie's parlour, and elms and acacias lined the low fence or rose grandly from the very centre of the garden.

While the young-mistress of the Fens was engaged in her pleasant calculations, Linnet, the daft girl, came and sat upon a lower step at her feet, looking up into her face with the rapt expression with which she had been wont to regard her favourite picture of the Madonna.

Natalie found time now and then to address a kind word to her admirer, whose happiness, on such occasions, was almost painful in its intensity.

When her lists were quite complete, Natalie showed them to old Elspeth, who had in her delight fairly haunted the footsteps of her young mistress about the house, and who rubbed her spectacles and read the catalogue with mingled astonishment and delight.

"The old days are certainly coming back again, my lady," she cried, tremulously. "Oh, if Miss Kate could have lived to see this day! And you are not afraid of acids from the marsh, and Sir Wilton is going to make the place grander than ever! I can hardly believe my eyes, my lady!"

Natalie smiled at the housekeeper's enthusiasm, and returned to the porch, which promised to become a favourite resort with her.

And thus the hours wore on.

The earl's young wife permitted Linnet to share her meals, as on the preceding day, and old Elspeth muttered continually her joy at the condescension of her mistress, who she was quite sure must have sprung from a noble family, else she would not be so gentle to her inferiors.

And Natalie blushed, but did not correct the very natural mistake.

In the afternoon the wind changed, sweeping up from the black and fetid marsh, and the windows upon that side of the dwelling were securely closed, and those looking upon the moor were opened wide to admit any pure air that might enter from that direction.

Natalie had always been accustomed to the sweetest and purest air, and she felt languid under the miasmatic breathings of the marsh. She therefore retired to her private parlour, drew a sofa to the window looking out upon the moor, piled the silken pillows under her head, and reclined upon them, gazing out upon the heather that waved in the breeze like purple and brown and green billows.

She had left Linnet in the housekeeper's room, busy with the arrangement of fresh bouquets, but she had scarcely nestled into a luxurious position when a low scratching sound was heard upon the door.

In obedience to her gentle command, Linnet entered her presence.

"See, Nata-lee!" said the daft girl, approaching her with a vase of flowers. "I have brought my pretty friends to see you. They love you already. See if they do not. When they love anyone they breathe their sweetest!"

Natalie inhaled the fragrance of the blossoms, expressing her admiration of them, and Linnet, more than satisfied, placed the vase upon the high mantel-piece, and seated herself at the feet of her young mistress.

Natalie grew silent and thoughtful, and her humble companion became absorbed in watching the flight of the birds over the moor, and the play of the sunbeams upon the heather, so that for some time the silence between them remained unbroken.

The young mistress indulged in a sensation of dreamy happiness, in which no sentiment was boldly defined, and gave herself up to the feeling of languor which it was impossible to shake off. She felt a weight upon her eyelids that pressed them irresistibly into slumber, her thoughts grew indistinct, and she slept.

And then Linnet arose, procured a quaint Chinese fan from among the curiosities upon a corner table, and crept beside her lovely young mistress, fanning her gently to keep away the buzzing flies and to cool the flushed cheek.

No Eastern sultana was ever fanned more softly by the most devoted of her slaves, or watched more tenderly while she slept, than was the rejected young wife by the poor crazed girl whose heart she had won by her beauty and kindness.

Natalie's awakening was as gentle as had been her dropping into sleep. She opened her eyes to find her humble friend watching her with loving gaze, and she said:

"Why, Linnet, have you been taking care of me while I slept? I am not used to such attention, and I fear I have given you a great deal of trouble," and she glanced at the fan.

Linnet disclaimed having had any trouble whatever, and begged her young mistress to look out at the birds and the sunshine, for they were in their very merriest mood at that moment.

Natalie took sufficient interest in them to fully satisfy poor Linnet, and then her gaze wandered aimlessly over the scene spread before her.

Suddenly she uttered an exclamation:

"Look, Linnet!" she cried, raising herself upon her elbow, and gazing from the window with unrepressed eagerness. "Do you not see someone coming upon the road a mile or two distant? I am sure I see a horse and wagon!"

"I see it!" said Linnet. "It is the agent come to see that the house has not been carried away. He comes twice a year, granny says. What is a year? He was here not long ago, since the birds and the flowers came!"

She spoke as if to herself, not requiring an answer.

Natalie watched the advancing speck, until she became very sure that she had not been mistaken in her surmise, and then she sprang up, full of joy and excitement, exclaiming:

"Perhaps Elmer has returned! Perhaps he has sent me a governess! That wagon must certainly be coming here!"

With eager hands, she hastened to improve her toilet, smoothing out the soft blue dress that had been given her by the Lady Leopold, refastening the little lace collar with the dainty knot of blue ribbons, and brushing out the rippling golden mass of curls that fell in waves upon her shoulders.

She looked very neat and very lady-like when she had finished her toilet, and more than ever lovely with the light sparkling in her blue eyes, and the soft colour fluttering in and out of her delicate cheeks.

Her joyful excitement had given her a bloom and brightness that made her resemblance to the Lady Leopold more vivid than ever before. She needed only a dash of violet in her eyes, and dark lashes to shade them, to make her the exact counterpart of her nobler-born sister.

"My picture! my picture!" murmured poor Linnet, with an adoring look, holding a fold of her young mistress's dress.

Natalie smiled kindly upon her, and looked out of the window.

The wagon had approached so near that she recognized its occupant instantly.

It was Roke—the earl's valet.

He drove a stout horse, and the large wagon was well loaded with boxes and baskets, but he was quite alone.

"He has not brought the governess!" murmured the earl's young wife, in a tone of disappointment. "But, perhaps," she added, with reviving hope, "she will come on to-morrow. I am sorry that Elmer sent his valet. I cannot forget how he insulted me at the cottage near Afton Grange!"

The remembrance of that scene, when the valet had treated her with such marked insolence, came over her, and she said:

"Linnet, dear, go down to the porch, and if that man, who is coming in the wagon, asks for me, bring him up to my room. I shall not go down!"

Linnet obeyed, happy to be of service to her young lady.

Natalie watched the wagon as it drove up to the Fens, entered the garden, and approached the porch, and then she moved restlessly across the floor several times, dreading the coming interview with her husband's servant, from whom she apprehended farther insolence.

It was not long before she heard his step upon the stairs, and Linnet's soft tones directing him to the door of the parlour.

And then his knock sounded, and the daft girl ushered him into the presence of her young mistress.

Natalie stood in the centre of the room, with a defiant air that might have been taken for haughtiness, and with a proud demeanour that would have well become a young duchess.

Lord Templecombe's unacknowledged daughter betrayed her paternity at that moment in the proud nobility of her carriage and the lofty serenity of her manner.

Roke, who had received instructions to treat her with the utmost respect, felt that it would have been impossible to treat her otherwise, whatever might have been the directions of his master.

Bowing very low, he advanced into the parlour, remaining at a respectful distance from Natalie, and said:

"My lord has sent me to you, my lady, with some presents and a letter."

His deferential manner and the title he bestowed upon her placed Natalie quite at her ease, and she felt herself mistress of the situation. If there was a slightly ironical emphasis upon the title, "my lady," she did not observe it.

With the manner appropriate to her position as his master's wife, she said:

"You may give the letter to Linnet and retire into the corridor!"

With another deep bow the valet gave the letter into Linnet's hands, and retreated backward to the door, as if he had been retiring from the presence of the queen.

He went into the corridor, and Linnet closed the door behind him.

The earl's young wife then took the letter, and began to read it.

It had no address upon the envelope, and was so closely sealed as to defy the impertinent curiosity of even Roke, whose probable efforts to learn its contents had clearly been ineffectual.

It was a loving letter—such a one as might have been written by a devoted husband to his confiding wife. Every line breathed regret at having been obliged to leave her in her solitude, and hope for the future. He told her that he had been unable to find her a suitable governess, and that while he employed himself in looking for one, he wished her to study the books he had sent her by his valet, and practise the music he had personally selected for her. He begged her to accept the few presents he had bought for her, and to remain in quiet content at the Fens until he should come to her, bringing a suitable instructress with him. He begged her to write to him, and promise him she would not leave the Fens without his knowledge and permission, and concluded with renewed assurances of his love, and artful allusions to the time when he could proudly acknowledge her to the world as his bride.

"What a beautiful letter!" murmured the happy wife, pressing it to her lips. "How could I ever have doubted Elmer? He could not have been in his right mind when he wrote me that cruel letter at the Grange! But why do I remember that letter at this moment? Nothing but joy and love should find place in my heart to-day!"

She glanced over several passages in the letter a second time, and then bade Linnet summon the valet to the parlour.

The housekeeper's grand-daughter hastened into the corridor, encountering Roke near the door, where he was depositing a heavy box, which he had just brought up from his wagon. She delivered the message to him, and he obeyed it, bringing the box with him into the parlour.

"This box is for yourself, my lady!" he said, setting it down near the door. "Shall I open it for your ladyship?"

The earl's wife bowed assent, and handed him a key which had come to her in the letter.

Roke carefully unstrapped the box, turned the key in its lock, and then arose to his feet, saying:

"There is another box for your ladyship in the wagon. Shall I bring that up here also?"

Natalie replied in the affirmative.

The valet hastened down to the wagon, soon returning under a heavier box than the former.

This he opened by means of a hammer, which he produced from one of his capacious pockets.

"That is all for your ladyship," he said, respectfully. "I have a large supply of housekeeper's stores, which I am to put into the pantry. If your ladyship has no farther need of me at present, I will bring them in and put my horse under cover."

"Very well. You may do so, Roke!"

"If your ladyship desires anything that my lord has not sent, his lordship begs that you will send him your orders. Or, if your ladyship will favour me with them, I may be able to procure them at the nearest town!"

"Should I need anything more than my husband sent me, I will send you for it," said his master's wife. "Linnet will go downstairs with you, and see that you have a luncheon!"

Linnet withdrew, followed by the valet, and Natalie was left alone.

Her first act was to examine the box last brought up by Roke, and this was found to contain a collection of all the latest novels, some standard works of fiction, a few scholastic books, and a selection of new music.

Natalie was delighted with them.

When she had looked over them sufficiently, she turned to the other box, and lifted the cover.

It contained the articles of attire she most needed, with finery enough to gratify almost any feminine taste.

The articles had been ordered by the earl himself, and he had seen them packed, ready for transportation.

There were dainty sets of garments of the finest linen; gowns completely made, which promised an exact fit; shawls, collars, &c., besides piles of handkerchiefs of delicate cambric, purposely bought unhemmed that Natalie's fingers might be kept busy.

The earl was evidently of opinion that his bride's idleness might prove his worst foe, for there were also quantities of canvas, Berlin wools, and other materials for lady-like occupation.

Natalie noticed that the gowns were nearly all of silk, such as were very suitable to her rank as a countess, and they were of the colours she best loved.

A pretty work-box, and a writing-desk were also found, and the latter she carried to the little table near the sofa, proceeding to answer her husband's letter.

Looking over the stores of paper, &c., contained in her portable desk, Natalie came upon a little case containing a set of jewellery formed of the prettiest Neapolitan coral.

She uttered a little cry of delight as she beheld them.

She tried them on before the mirror, and then sat down to write her thanks for her "dear Elmer's goodness" to her, and to promise anything he desired.

Her letter breathed a spirit of happiness, and she lingered over it loth to conclude.

But at length she signed her name "Natalie," sealed the envelope, and dropped a plentiful supply of wax upon it, stamping it with a seal bearing a device of two united hearts.

She had scarcely finished, when Linnet made her appearance, and the earl's wife dropped the letter into her pocket, welcoming the crazed girl with a happy smile.

"Dinner is ready, Nata-lee," said the housekeeper's grand-daughter, in her hesitating, distinct speech. "Maybe it's not dinner—but something is ready!"

Natalie arose, and went with her humble friend

down to the low dining-hall, where old Elspeth, almost pained with delight, awaited her young mistress.

She had spread out upon a massive mahogany side-board the stores of sweet-meats, potted meats, cheese, pickled vegetables, foreign fruits, both conserved in sugar and dried, and she now pointed to them with something of a dramatic air.

"Look, my lady!" she ejaculated. "And there's a box of oranges, and there are apples, and hot-house grapes, and pines. Surely the Fens was never so grand before! Its last days are its best days. Let 'em talk about their acids from the marsh," she added, triumphantly, looking at the walls for contradiction; "folks have found out at last, heaven be thanked, that there ain't a sweeter, lovelier, more picturesque spot on the face of the earth than the Fens!"

The idea was so absurd that Natalie laughed gleefully.

"And they ain't all," continued old Elspeth. "They ain't the half! The hosts of things in the pantry which Sir Wilton has sent are enough to take away my breath! There's enough of some things to last six months. The servants haven't come yet, and the man says none have been found good enough to wait upon Sir Wilton's bride. He's right enough, for a bonnier lady never sat foot upon the earth! I feel young again—that I do. I can do the work myself without help!"

The earl's wife having sufficiently admired the display of edibles, the housekeeper recovered her senses sufficiently to indicate a little collation which she had spread upon the little round table by the window for her young mistress.

It consisted of cakes, fruits, and a bottle of light French wine.

"I do not care for wine," said Natalie, as loudly as she could speak. "I will keep only one bottle, and you shall have the rest, Elspeth. You are old and have need of some such things, particularly if you persist in waiting upon me!"

"Yes, my lady," returned the housekeeper, believing that she understood what had been said. "Great ladies always like wine, and it was thoughtful in Sir Wilton to send it. Will he be coming home soon, my lady?"

Natalie replied to the question, and then repeated her observation.

It was some time before the old woman could be made to comprehend her gift, and at last only by pantomime, her young mistress pushing the wine, which stood near, towards her with significant gestures.

When she did understand it, nothing could exceed old Elspeth's delight.

It then appeared from her delighted mutterings that she had often longed for something of the kind, but that she had given up all hope of having it in this world!

She carried it to her pantry with the air of one who has found a treasure and desires to secrete it, though from whom in her case it would be difficult to say, muttering as she went of cramps and colics, which nothing could ever induce her to attribute to the air from the marsh.

Natalie enjoyed her delicate repast, and the cup of fragrant tea that came after it, fancying them to have been purchased by her husband for her use, and little thinking he had only commissioned his servant to buy them.

When she had finished, she went up to the drawing-room, attended by Linnet, who followed her like her shadow, and gave a second audience to Roke.

It was brief, for she did not like the man in any of his moods, and she would not herself deliver her letter into his hands, but bade Linnet do so.

The valet marked her aversion with secret anger, but nothing of any emotion was betrayed in his manner.

He put the letter in his breast-pocket, and made his adieux, declaring that he should place the missive in his master's hands that very night, no accident preventing.

And then he went away, his master's wife watching him drive out of the garden and over the moor, with a sensation of relief.

When he had passed nearly out of sight, Natalie resumed her reclining posture on the couch in her parlour, and read over her husband's letter, finding new expressions of affection, and fresh cause for happiness.

Lord Templecombe's plans were in part successful. His wife was contented in the home where he had placed her—that home where death lurked in the heavy air and brooded in the neighbouring marsh!

(To be continued.)

A SOLAR HALO.—A lunar halo, which there is never any difficulty in perceiving, is formed by rays of light falling on condensed aqueous vesicles, or on thin clouds. It is not, perhaps, generally known that similar haloes

are also observable round the sun; but as they can only be seen through a blackened glass, they usually pass unperceived. It is therefore not uninteresting to learn that Professor Decharme, of Angers, observed one a few days ago, at five p.m. He remarked that the halo, instead of presenting the appearance of a flat circle, seemed to be concave, like the torse of a column inwardly scooped out.

SCIENCE.

THE cylinder of the hydraulic press which was used to push the Great Eastern to the water weighed twenty-two tons.

FROM Cape Lopez southward there is sometimes not a single fall of rain for twenty-four to twenty-six months.

It is stated that the manufacture of the needle-gun has been provisionally suspended at Châtellerault. There was apparently some doubt as to whether the weapon should be fitted with a sabre-bayonet or a triangular one.

THE tunnel under the Alps has reached 2,321 metres in length on the French side, and 3,470 on the Italian. The quartz rock becomes harder as the work proceeds. At the present rate of progress nearly five years will be required to complete the work.

A COMMISSION from the Board of Trade opened its session in Liverpool the other day, to take evidence respecting the lighting, the buoying, and the proposed introduction of fog-signals in the Channel, with the object of preventing the numerous wrecks which have taken place, especially on the Irish coast.

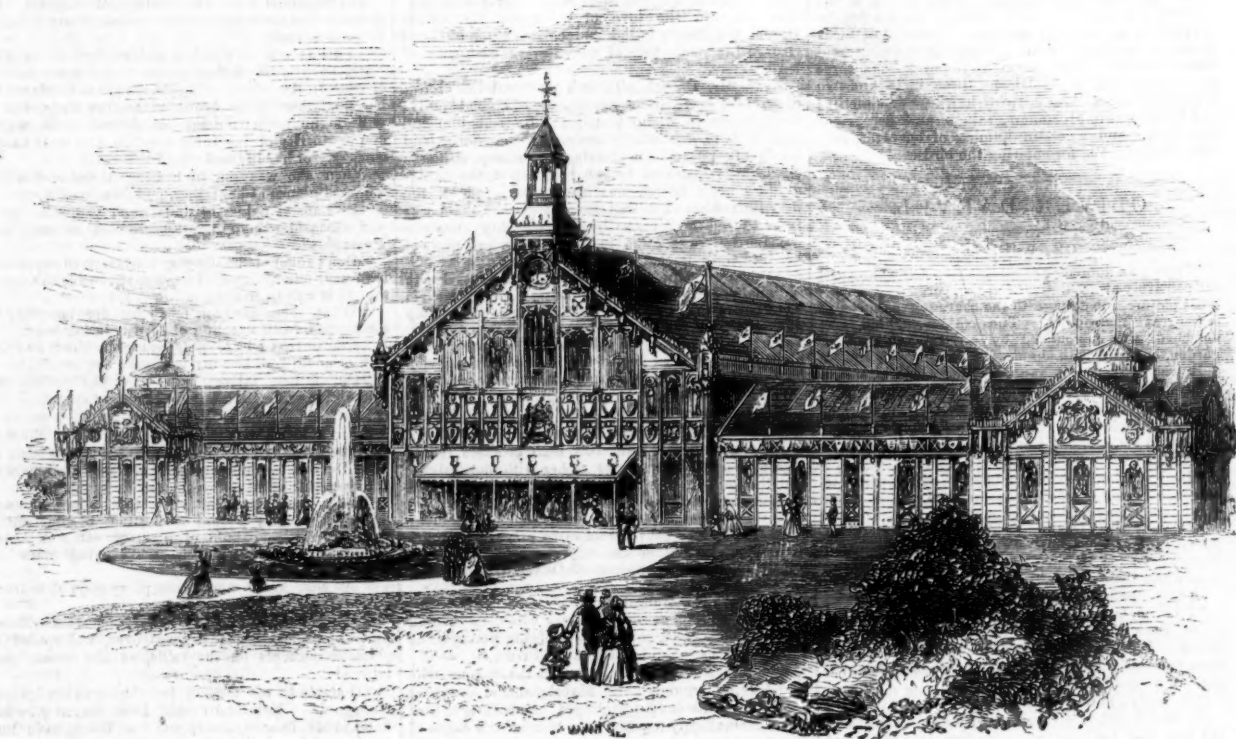
THE Lidner gun, which has recently been tried, in the presence of the Emperor Francis Joseph and a special commission, has given the following results: In the space of five minutes a single gun fired forty shots, which all perforated an oak plank an inch and a half thick at a distance of 200 paces.

SHAND, MASON, AND Co. have lately completed a very powerful floating steam fire-engine for the Austrian Government, which, after being subjected to some severe trials, has been forwarded to Trieste. A new land steam fire-engine, also built by the same makers, for the city of Hong-Kong, has been shipped on board Her Majesty, bound for that port.

M. CHEVREUL made a paste of white-lead and water and another of white-lead and linseed oil, and placed them in separate tubes. Above the oily paste he placed water, and above the watery paste oil. The oil in the latter case displaced the water, but the water did not displace the oil in the former. In the corresponding experiments with clay and kaolin it was found that water would in each case drive out the oil, but the oil could not displace the water.

NEW MODE OF PURIFYING WATER.—It is stated that the solid refuse of shale used in the manufacture of paraffin oil is a most perfect purifier of the filthiest water. A few days ago a quantity of the sewage water of Musselburg was experimented upon by throwing into it some of this shale refuse. After being allowed to settle, the water was found to have been completely purified. Two bottles, one of them filled with the sewage, and the other with Crawley water, as used by the inhabitants of Edinburgh, were submitted to an eminent medical practitioner, who, upon being requested to select the one preferable for drinking purposes, unhesitatingly chose that which had been purified by the shale refuse. The substance is at present thrown aside as valueless.

A NEW BREACH-LOADING NEEDLE RIFLE.—The invention of Mr. Thomas Wilson, of Birmingham, which is a great improvement upon the Prussian needle gun. The entire mechanism in the Wilson gun is completely enclosed in the rear of the barrel, and is never exposed to wet or accident, either in its open or closed condition. The Prussian, and all other needle guns that we have seen have many weak points, the principal one of which is their great exposure to injury from delicate projecting pieces, when open for loading, but this gun has no projecting parts, and, therefore, no liability to injury from this source. The gun, moreover, requires but two simple movements for opening and closing the breech, which are so easy and rapid that the arm can be loaded and fired twenty times in the minute. The mechanism in closing the gun carries the cartridge into its chamber (which is a great desideratum in a breech-loader), and requiring neither lock, hammer, nor extractor, is necessarily of very simple construction, and can be made at a less cost than the ordinary Enfield rifle. The cartridge used with this rifle carries its ignition at its extreme base and centre, and is much simpler and less costly to manufacture than the Prussian cartridge. By a very simple alteration, and without additional cost, the gun can be made to fire the Sneider cartridge, or any similar ammunition.



[THE YORKSHIRE FINE ARTS AND INDUSTRIAL EXHIBITION.]

INDUSTRIAL EXHIBITIONS.

SINCE 1851 the example set by England has been followed, with varied success, by the leading nations of the earth; France, America, Austria, Russia, have all had their world, or international shows, and this more than once.

So beneficial have these shows been felt that provincial capitalists have sought to emulate their metropolis. Witness that of Dublin in 1865, set on foot by the munificence of a single individual, Mr. Dargan; and, lastly, the Yorkshire Fine Arts and Industrial Exhibition, a correct view of the building and grounds of which we this week give our readers. If farther proof were necessary of the extent to which the exhibition mania has permeated all classes, we need only call attention to the vast number of district working men's industrial exhibitions that have been set on foot and successfully carried out between that originated in the Agricultural Hall, Islington, a year or two since, and succeeded by others in various parts of London and the provinces, to that now one now opened at Islington, and which is the wonder of all who have examined it.

The chief advance, perhaps, made by the directors of the great Exhibition of 1862 over their predecessor of 1851 was by the addition of a fine-art gallery, which contained a collection that had never before, at any one time, been equalled. A similar idea has been carried out by the officials of the Exhibition at York, of which we now give a description.

This, for a provincial city, vast undertaking was opened with all due form and ceremony by his Grace the Archbishop of York, attended by the Lord Mayor and Corporation of York, and the noblemen and gentlemen of the county who had aided in the scheme.

The first proposal for undertaking an Exhibition of Art and Industry in that city was made in November, 1865, at a meeting of the citizens, held in the Guildhall and presided over by the Lord Mayor, and was received with such favour that, in the course of a few days, upwards of £6,000 was subscribed in Yorkshire to meet any loss that might result in the carrying out of the scheme.

The plan, as first proposed, did not contemplate anything so extensive as the existing Exhibition. For a considerable time great uncertainty prevailed as to where the Exhibition should be located, and it was not till the 17th of March that the present building was begun, and in three months it was so far advanced that the Flower Show of the Yorkshire Gala was held in it on the 13th and 14th of June; and,

satisfactory to say, without one accident involving the loss of life or limb to any person employed.

Messrs. J. B. & W. Atkinson and Mr. Edward Taylor were appointed architects, and authorized to prepare the plans and specifications; and, whether we consider the firmness of its construction, the elegance of its proportions, its external appearance, or its internal fitness, the building reflects the greatest credit on these gentlemen. It comprises, in addition to the magnificent hall, two spacious picture galleries, an annex specially arranged for the exhibition of machinery, together with a lecture-room, refreshment-rooms, &c. With the exception of the building erected for the Art Treasures Exhibition in Manchester, this is the first occasion in which a provincial exhibition of this character has been held in a building specially provided for it.

The great hall is 195 feet long by 80 feet wide, with galleries all round 18 feet wide, giving an area of upwards of 24,000 square feet.

The picture galleries are each 60 feet long by 30 feet wide, opening into pavilions each 40 feet square, giving an area of 6,800 square feet, and providing nearly 8,000 feet of wall available for hanging pictures.

The machinery annex contain an area of 9,000 square feet.

The refreshment, lecture rooms, and other offices contain an area of about 1,000 square feet, making a total for the entire building of upwards of 40,000 square feet.

In addition to this area, there is in connection with the building, and available for the use and convenience of visitors, an area of between three and four acres of ground, in which, in fine weather, music is provided.

Of its multifarious contents and arrangements, adapted as they are to instruct, amuse, and even surprise people of any rank, both social and mental, the following synopsis will give a perfect notion. Thus it runs:

"In this exhibition is gathered the choicest collection of paintings, ancient and modern, by all the best masters, ever made in the north of England. In addition to which are busts, statuary, terra-cottas, bas-reliefs, &c.; photographs, water-colour drawings, chromo-lithographs, articles of vertu, ancient armour; the most extensive cabinet of old china and earthenware ever collected in any exhibition; examples of art in modern industry—gold and silver work, electroplate, bronzes, castings, wood-carvings, bookbinding, leather-work, tapestry, needlework, lace, artificial flowers, &c., stained glass, glass blowing and con-

graving; aquariums, rare specimens of stuffed birds and animals; telescopes, telegraphic instruments, machinery in motion, silk ribbon weaving by Jacquard loom, lace loom, needle-making machine, steam sewing machine, gas-engine, a number of working models, a large working model of a steam-engine made entirely of glass, showing all the inside parts when working, a beehive so arranged that every bee can be seen; natural products, minerals, salmon ladder, with live fish, &c."

In addition, as we have hinted, catering for all tastes, for those whose eyes and limbs are wearied by continuous inspection, the executive have provided music, entertainments of various kinds, and lectures. Wisely, again, we think, the price of admission has been as suitable to a people's exhibition—three days one shilling and the other three sixpence; children, half price. Again, the railway directors have co-operated, by carrying excursionists at very low fares, all of whom, by showing their tickets, are admitted any and every day at sixpence. By way of *addenda*, let us add, that at the coming great Exhibition in Paris next year, about which there has been so much talk, a guillotine, on a new model, will be shown, invented by a Prussian, capable of cutting off six heads, and even eight on an emergency, simultaneously. The blade is put in motion by a beam adapted to a powerful steam-engine, and is suspended so as not to fall vertically on the neck, but to cut off the head by a circular and rotary motion. *Qy.*—Has the inventor no qualms when he remembers that the inventors of the French guillotine and the ancient Scottish maiden were the first to suffer by them?

MODERN HAWKING-COSTUME IN FRANCE.—A spirited attempt is being made to revive falconry in France, and under the countenance of the Emperor, who has directed the War Department to grant permission to hawk over the camp ground at Châlons. The Champagne Hawking Club has been established, with M. Alfred Werlé (son-in-law of the Duke of Montebello) at its head, as master of the flight; the Baron d'Aubilly, Viscount Adrien de Brimont, being among the members. The uniform adopted is elegant, and consists of a green hunting-coat, red waistcoat, green breeches, red stockings covering the knee, yellow leggings, and boots. The hat is of gray felt, style Louis XIII., cocked on one side with the *bouton* of the club and a tuft of heron hackles, and is ornamented, like the collar and sleeves of the coat and front of the waistcoat, with the French *galon-de-rénée* being one line of silver between two of gold for the

masters and the reverse for the men. The cadger is dressed all in green, and wears high gaiters instead of red stockings and leggings. The *bouton* of the uniform represents a hawk hooked on the fist, in silver upon a plain gold ground. The stud of birds is numerous enough, most of them in training, and some first-rate. There are eight young falcons, three tiercels, six last year's falcons, three male and two female goshawks, three sparrow-hawks, a few merlins and hobbies, several lanners, sakers, and peregrines from Tunis, and a certain number of buzzards, harriers, kestrels, &c., for entering the birds.

OLIVER DARVEL.

CHAPTER I.

'Twas on a summer's evening that a fair young girl sat pensively at needle-work at the porch of a somewhat picturesque cottage in the charming suburbs of our great metropolis. The cottage, which was detached, was surrounded by a large uncared-for garden, crowded with shrubs.

It was a rustling that aroused the girl's attention from her work, or, more properly speaking, her thoughts. In another instant a young man sprang through the shrubs. "Oh, my love," he cried, clasping her to his bosom, "I could no longer obey you. I have risked much to come hither again."

"Dear Oliver," she exclaimed, endeavouring to extricate herself, "why persist in coming here when you know it may lead to such miserable results?"

"I do not care," was the reckless reply. "Between the tyranny of my two uncles I shall be driven wild. Tossed from one to the other, the life I have led has been worse than a dog's."

Deeply moved by these words, the girl replied: "Be calm, Oliver, and, above all, speak softly, for I am almost sure Ruth is set to watch my movements. Now," she added, "tell me truly, Oliver; have you really made up your mind to strike out a path for yourself?"

"If I only knew what to do, Mabel!"—"I would either go openly to Uncle James and tell him that he must relax his iron rule and treat you as a man, or I would abjure dependence upon him altogether."

"But you, Mabel," was the passionate reply, "forget that such a course would separate us for ever. Besides, the talents you believe me to possess would procure me nothing better than the status of a poor half-starved usher in a school."

"Then seek a clerkship in a merchant's office. Anything better than dependence."

Oliver pointed to his narrow chest, and despondingly answered:

"I should never be able to endure the confinement of a counting-house. I have no head for trade."

"You are a poet, Oliver, and naturally take a morbid view of life. Only try work for a few days, or weeks, and see if it will not be better than dependence upon your uncle. Ah, if I were only a man, I would carve out a destiny for myself."

"Is that intended as a reproach, Mabel. Have I not confessed that I am good for nothing?"

"You," replied the noble-minded girl, with a faint flush, and a look almost of sternness upon her face—"you, like the rest of God's creatures, have a life-work to perform, and you must do it. As for me, remember my fate is fixed. I love you in spite of your faults, and I shall never love another. This I candidly tell you, if it be any consolation. At present there is nothing left for us but submission to our lot—but," she cried, suddenly, "for heaven's sake, leave me, Oliver."

He held her hand firmly, in spite of her efforts to escape, and whispered:

"If I cannot come, I must write. I cannot live unless I communicate with you in some way. Say that you will answer me, Mabel. I will put my letter under the broken fountain poulder, and you can leave your reply in the same place."

"Yes, yes—I will write," was the hurried response, for she heard heavy steps on the gravel walk leading up to the front entrance to the cottage, and a harsh, commanding voice giving directions to the stable-boy, and then the lovers parted.

Mabel then resumed her needlework at the porch, and sat trembling at the sound of that loud voice, for well she knew that had anything gone wrong with her father that day she would be made to bear the burden of his ill-humour.

Thus she sat with palpitating heart, doubtful whether to go into the house or go to meet him. *Ad interim*, a slight résumé of the career of the two brothers who are to play important parts in our history will not be uninteresting.

John and James Tilson had begun life in a drapery business, which had been left to them by their father, conditionally that they educated and brought up

their lovely little half-sister, May; who was many years younger than her brothers.

So beautiful and graceful in her style was May that she won the love of a certain Mr. Oliver Darvel, the bosom friend and college chum of Lord George Linwood, both of whom were customers of her brothers.

Now, Mr. Darvel, although poor and the protégé of Lord George, was the younger son of a good family; thus the union which took place between him and May was, to aristocratic notions, a *misalliance*, and for family reasons the marriage ceremony, although legal and solemnized in the presence of the bridegroom's noble friend, was clandestine; indeed, the first intimation of it that reached her brothers was from the mortal illness which seized May when one day Lord George came to tell her the sad news of her husband's death.

At the outset the brothers stormed and raved with indignation, but speedily they became appeased when Lord George not only satisfied them as to the legality of their sister's marriage, but left with them a munificent sum of money for the use of their prospective nephew, or niece, as it might be, but with permission for them to use the money in their business until the child became of age.

As has been said, May's illness was mortal, for she died giving birth to Oliver.

Some three years after this, both brothers fell in love with a Miss Benson, or rather with her fortune, and the lady accepting John, they became mortal enemies, and dissolved partnership.

In the division of their effects, the money given by Lord George was not referred to in any way, though it was tacitly understood by both that they were jointly to bear the expense of Oliver's maintenance and education.

To lighten this, John had the child removed to his own home as soon as his wife was established in it, and the tender and gentle heart of the young bride welcomed the orphan boy as a sacred trust.

But, alas for Oliver's prospects, the young wife died, leaving an only child, Mabel; and although at her funeral the brothers clasped hands in a hollow truce, the unhappy nephew soon became the cause of dissension again.

John demanded that the moiety of the five hundred pounds given them for the boy's use should be surrendered to him, with such profits as had accrued from it while in his brother's hands.

He insisted that as the lad lived with him, he had the best right to the use of his little fortune; but in this view his brother by no means concurred.

The latter stated that he was willing to allow a fair remuneration for the boy's keep, but he insisted that it should be liquidated from the means already in John's hands, while the portion managed by himself should be left to accumulate for Oliver's future benefit.

Besides, James argued that he never intended to marry; that his fortune would eventually descend to Oliver, together with the slender portion absolutely belonging to him; while John had a daughter of his own, and it was doubtful if strict justice would be meted out to the lad in the settlement of his brother's estate.

This insinuation caused an explosion which separated the brothers still more widely than before.

John Tilson was a man of fifty-five, with iron gray hair, a high narrow forehead and sharp features. On his head the organ of acquisitiveness was enormously developed, while that of conscientiousness was proportionally small, and the shrewd expression of his face bore out the truth of these indications.

He entered the hall, looking less cross than usual, and as he hung up his hat he brusquely inquired of a young woman who appeared suddenly before him:

"What are you doing here, Ruth, and where is my daughter?"

The person he addressed was a vulgar-looking but handsome woman of twenty-five, with a bright black eye and red, ripe-looking lips.

"If you please, sir, I have something important to say about Miss Mabel."

"Never mind now, Ruth. Keep your discoveries till to-morrow, and then—"

The woman smiled knowingly, and with a familiar nod replied:

"Very well, Mr. Tilson; my news will keep."

"You can serve dinner at once, for I am as hungry as a wolf; and let my daughter know that I am waiting for her."

Ruth disappeared, for she had tact enough to understand that in his present mood farther words would be an annoyance.

"Hum! Who can say that I am not a good father to find such a husband as Paul Denton for my absurd daughter? His common sense will be a balance to her foolishness, and she shall accept him, or my name is not John Tilson."

As he uttered this Mabel appeared at the open door.

She regarded him with unfeigned surprise. By the time they reached the dining-room, he turned to the servant and said:

"This is one of the few golden days of my life, Ruth, so you may bring up one of the dozen bottles of wine in the cellar. They were given to Mabel by her godfather to be drunk at her wedding, but it will do no harm to drink one of them to the health and prosperity of the bride elect, on this most auspicious day of her life and mine."

When she was out of hearing Mabel cast a bewildered glance at her father, and faintly said:

"I—I am at a loss to understand you, sir. Have you reconsidered your objections, and relented towards—"

"Don't anger me by uttering the insane thought that is in your mind, Mabel. I have answered *no* to Oliver, and no it will be to the end."

"What, then, can you mean by my marriage?" she gasped, with a feeling of despair in her heart.

"I mean that I have promised your hand, but not to a ne'er-do-well like my worthless nephew."

"Oh, father, father, how can you torture me thus? A bride elect I can never be to anyone but Oliver."

"Ah, indeed! we shall see to that," was the sardonic reply. "I have this day pledged your hand to Paul Denton, the junior partner of the great Lombard Street bank carried on by Denton Brothers."

The woman returned with the wine. Tilson uncorked it, and poured a portion of its ruddy contents into a couple of glasses. One of these he pushed towards Mabel, and bowing with an air of mock reverence, said:

"To your health and future prosperity, Mrs. Denton."

Goaded to the last extremity by these words, Mabel pushed the glass back; it tilted over, and spilled its precious contents on the table, as she arose, and faltered:

"It seems to me a sorry jest that you are perpetrating, sir. You know that I can never give my hand to Mr. Denton, nor to any man living, save him to whom I have pledged my troth."

In his rage at these words the wine Mr. Tilson was drinking nearly choked him, and a violent fit of coughing drove the blood in a torrent to his sallow face. For an instant Mabel feared for his life, and rushed to his side with a glass of water in her hand. He, pointing to the door, with effort gasped:

"Go. Think better of what you have just said, or it will be the worse for you."

Mabel silently obeyed him, and she was no sooner out of hearing, than he turned to Ruth, and eagerly spoke:

"Now you may tell me quickly what you had to say to me when I came in."

The woman drew near to him, and replied, in a guarded tone:

"Only this, sir. Mr. Oliver comes here reg'lar, and Miss Tilson meets him. I had my eye on her this evenin', as you bade me, and I saw him come, a looking, oh! so wretched, sir, you can't think. I just slipped out and listened."

"And what did you hear?"

"Only this, sir: that they mean to be true to each other, an' he's to write to her when they can't meet. Their letters are to be hid under the broken fountain, sir, and you can easily get 'em in your own possession if you wish to."

Mr. Tilson closed his thin lips firmly, and seemed to be reflecting on the best course to pursue to bend his daughter to his will. He presently turned to Ruth and said:

"You have done me a good service, and you may be sure that I shall not forget it. I shall use this information to bring this contumacious girl to her senses, and force her to make way for a new mistress here. What do you say to that, ruby lips?"

She blushed, and replied:

"I'm only afraid it's too good news to be true, sir."

"You need have no doubt on that score, Ruth, for my mind's made up. I believe I am now nerved for the battle I have to fight. Plague take it! I wonder why women were gifted with such an inconvenient thing as a will of their own. I'll break that of my daughter, or I—I'll break her heart. See if I don't."

"Hum—I doubt if you will do either," muttered Ruth. "She's not made of that sort of stuff; you'll yet find she'll be more than a match for you, I am afraid."

Mabel had retreated to the parlour as she was bidden. Mr. Tilson came in, threw himself upon a seat opposite to her, and after a lengthened and contemptuous survey of her, he said:

"You are a pretty daughter, upon my word, to dare to speak to me as you did just now. Don't you know that you belong to me body and soul? that I

have the absolute right to dispose of you as I choose?"

Mabel tried to steady her voice as she replied: "I know that obedience to parents is the first duty of a child, but I also know that where too much is demanded on their part, heaven will not too harshly judge those who refuse compliance with arbitrary commands. I am sorry to anger you, father, but when you accepted Mr. Denton's proposal for my hand you knew it would be impossible for me to give it to him."

"Why impossible?" he burst forth. "You surely don't mean to make me believe that this stupid engagement with my worthless nephew is to stand in the way of your advantageous settlement in life? Denton is the most generous of men, for he offers to take you without a dowry. Pray what more can you require in the man you may marry?"

"Only to love him, father. I assure you that if Oliver were entirely out of the question, I could never consent to marry Paul Denton."

"And why not? Denton is not a bad-looking fellow; he is good-natured and liberal, and he would let you do just as you please."

Mabel sighed: "It may be a fatal prepossession, father, but it will prove as lasting as my life. If I do not marry Oliver, no other man will ever make me his wife."

Again the anger Tilson had with difficulty repressed surged up, and he furiously cried:

"After what I have just said, how dare you brave me by speaking in such a strain as that! You defy me to my very face, you ungrateful girl. But let me tell you one thing: if you refuse to give up your darling Oliver, I fancy he can be induced to renounce you."

He paused, as if expecting a reply, and she sadly said:

"Oliver can never renounce me, father, for he needs me. We were never told that it was wrong to love each other till it was too late to save us from the error into which we have fallen."

"But tell me truly and honestly, Mabel, if I could prove to you that Oliver is willing to give you up, would you still refuse to accept the brilliant position that is offered you?"

She hesitated an instant, and then replied: "I will endeavour to do what is right under any circumstances, father; but you will wring from my poor Oliver no such concession as that."

"Well, well; we shall see. I don't believe that Oliver Darvel has stamina enough to hold fast to anything—not even to the woman he loves. I intend to show him to you in his true colours, and prove to you how unworthy he is of the attachment you have thrown away on him. But as the reward of success, I shall expect you to receive Paul Denton as your future husband."

"I cannot promise that, sir, though I believe I might safely do so on the impossible contingency you propose."

He plainly saw that his only hope of success lay in convincing her that Oliver was ready to listen to the voice of interest, and secure the reversion of his uncle James's estate by renouncing his allegiance to herself.

He sat there in the twilight perfecting the details of his nefarious plan of action, and rubbed his hands gleefully as he finally muttered:

"That will do, that will do, and both shall fall into the trap I shall so cleverly set for them."

Tilson had himself set the copies from which Mabel learned to write, and he knew that her hand was an exact counterpart of his own.

The exchange of letters could be readily accomplished through Ruth's assistance, who would be only too ready to lend herself to any treachery that might end in removing Mabel from her present position as mistress.

CHAPTER II.

Two weeks of doubt, fear, and latterly of anguish, passed over Mabel, finding her, at their close, bewildered in her own room reading, for the twentieth time, the last letter he had placed beneath the old fountain, and she found it difficult to believe that Oliver's hand had traced the following lines:

"London, June 12, 18—.

"It is clear to me that I am the most selfish of mortals to hold you to an engagement which I plainly see can never be other than a chain of bondage to you."

"My Uncle James tells me that the rich banker, Paul Denton, is a suitor for your hand, and your father is indignant at the mere thought that you may refuse him for my sake."

"I love you, Mabel, as I never hope to love another, but I have no right to stand between you and fortune. The changed tone of your late letters convinces me that such a thing is possible, though I could not

at once have believed it. I therefore release you from your pledges to myself, for I will never hold you bound by what your deepest affection does not sanction."

Mabel knew the lines by heart, yet she still coned them over with a heavy pain at her heart, which was harder to bear than all that had gone before.

If there had been a change in the tenor of her letters, had it not been caused by the change in his own, from tender trustfulness to bitter upbraidings? for after the first letter tampered with by Mr. Tilson there was no need to alter anything written by his daughter.

In their strong desire to separate the lovers, the brothers for once acted in concert.

John Tilson sought James and confided to him his plan to produce a final rupture between them.

James Tilson talked to his nephew of the marriage of Mabel as a settled thing.

The lover was jealous, wretched, and irritable; his letters too faithfully reflected the state of his mind, and of course reacted on his betrothed.

Tilson had promised his daughter that with her own ears she should hear her cousin renounce her.

On the last evening of the second week of probation, he invited her to take a drive with him to her Uncle James's, where she should hear what he had promised two weeks ago.

At this announcement, Mabel's heart fainted within her. She would have been glad to be spared this bitter ordeal; yet there was a strange yearning in her heart to hear the sound of his beloved voice again, even if only to pronounce the words that she believed would for ever sever them.

Tilson made few efforts to keep up a conversation as they drove towards their destination; for he saw plainly that she was not listening to him. She sat with an expression of deep absorption, which assured him that she saw nothing of what was passing before her.

The carriage at length stopped in front of a house, in which James Tilson rented a suite of rooms. Mabel mechanically alighted, and ascending a flight of steps was taken by her father into a parlour handsomely fitted up. Her uncle addressed her:

"How do you do, Mabel? Come in here. Glad to see you, my dear. It seems that you require the last proof of my nephew's inconstancy, Mabel, and you shall have it. You will only have to sit still near this door, and hear what passes in the next room. Oliver is to meet your father and myself here at four this afternoon, and it is nearly that time now. We will leave you to yourself awhile, but you must be careful to make no noise."

Mabel passively consented, for she was too much stupefied by anguish to comprehend fully the actual position in which she found herself placed. She faintly heard whispers from the next room, but she made no effort to understand their meaning till the sound of a third voice startled her into sudden consciousness of what was passing so near her.

Oliver was there—her love, her idol was within a few feet of her.

She heard her father say:

"Good evening, Oliver. I am glad that you begin to understand how much in earnest your uncle and I are in this affair. He tells me that you are ready to renounce the silly attachment you and Mabel have formed, and I came hither to hear his assurance confirmed by your own lips."

"I do not know why you should need any other assurance than that already given through my Uncle James," replied Oliver, in a tone of deep dejection. "He truly says that I am nothing—that I have nothing to offer the woman I prefer, and therefore I have no right to hold Mabel bound to share my hapless destiny. She might have told you as much herself, and spared you the trouble of coming here."

"But do you willingly give her up?" asked James Tilson, and there was a menace in his tones at which poor Oliver sighed heavily, but he decisively replied:

"I renounce her willingly; but it is as much through consideration for her happiness as despair for my own future that I do this. Yet I am deeply in earnest. Mabel can choose a brighter lot than I can give her, and, after a bitter struggle, I have gained my own consent to relinquish the hopes I have been mad enough to cherish."

Again James Tilson's pitiless voice arose.

"Have you not been moved to act thus by the assurance that if you marry my niece I will cast you off and disinherit you? Speak the whole truth, Oliver, for I wish my brother to hear it."

After a brief hesitation, Oliver replied:

"Of course that threat has great weight with me, sir; I have been taught to do nothing useful, I have no resources within myself that would be available to win my bread, and I could never consent to bring the woman I love to the dire poverty that must be our portion if left to our own resources; I feel my own incompetency, therefore I shrink from assuming the

responsibility of another's happiness. I hope you are quite satisfied now, Uncle John."

Mabel's father took her hand and led her forward. He coldly said:

"You have heard for yourself, Mabel. My promise is fulfilled, and now you will redeem your part of our compact."

Mabel unclosed her colourless lips to reply, but the words died away on them in an inarticulate whisper, and her father almost forcibly withdrew her from the room, as he said, in a fierce undertone:

"Why multiply words on such a theme? The thing is done—Oliver has renounced you. You look quite overcome, and I must get you home as speedily as possible."

Really too ill and weak to contend against his strong will, Mabel passively submitted to be placed in the carriage and driven home, but she uttered not a word on the way.

When they reached the door of the cottage, she was lifted out half insensible, and taken to her room. In a few hours she was raving in the delirium of a brain fever, and a physician was summoned to her side, who pronounced the attack the result of some violent shock she had sustained.

When Mabel was hurried from the room by her father, Oliver threw himself back upon a seat and buried his face in his hands, his whole frame quivering with the emotions he could no longer repress.

Finding that Oliver did not look up, James Tilson brusquely said:

"It is in character with everything you have ever done, to sit snivelling there over a broken truth. Will you never face troubles like a man, Oliver? Why should you care if my faithless niece has broken with you? She wants a rich husband, and she will soon forget all about such a good-for-naught as you."

Thus attacked, the young man lifted his pallid face, but there were no tears in his eyes. Mr. Tilson went on:

"Why don't you answer my question, sir? Do you ever mean to face your circumstances like a man, and make an effort to earn a living for yourself?"

To this direct question Oliver replied:

"I would most gladly do that, sir, if a way were opened before me. It is very difficult for a young man educated as I have been to get into any suitable employment."

"Hum—and to please your rich uncle you have never pressed the subject. To keep well with me was the one thought of your life; I can very well understand that; I especially understand it since your wish to become my heir has led you to sacrifice the woman you profess to love. Now you have given her up it would serve you right if I left my fortune to Mabel; it would be fitting repayment for your craven submission to my will."

A crimson flush crossed the livid face of the listener, who, goaded beyond endurance by these words, passionately cried out:

"I was the sacrifice, not Mabel. It was for her good that I acted as you bade me. Her own letters proved to me that she would gladly break with me if a loophole for escape were left. As to your fortune, leave it to her if you choose, for without Mabel wealth would be a burden to me."

"Oh, how very independent we are, to be sure. If you are serious in wishing to earn your own living, start as I did from the lowest round of the ladder. I was, first, errand boy to your grandfather; then, shop boy; then, salesman; lastly, owner. You see the result—to-day I am rich; yes, rich, and respected by all who know me."

Oliver vaguely said:

"I cannot now begin as you did, Uncle James, for I have not had the same training that was given you by your father. Anything would have been better than the dependence from which I have not been permitted to escape."

"Not permitted! how dare you say that? A pretty story, truly, that I held you back! I wish you to understand that from this hour you may take your fate in your own hands. Now I hope you understand."

Stung into resistance by this undisguised contempt, Oliver arose, and looking around for his hat, said:

"I begin to comprehend, uncle, that it is your purpose to rid yourself of me. Good-bye, sir; now that I fully understand our mutual relations, I shall not again intrude into your presence."

To these words his uncle mockingly replied:

"I am glad that you are at last goaded into showing something of the spirit of a man."

He had exactly two pounds and six shillings from the quarterly allowance paid to him by his uncle.

All his worldly possessions were easily packed in a valise, and taking this in his hand, Oliver Darvel went out into the world, no more fitted to cope with its difficulties than the most delicately nurtured girl.

He took no note of whether he was going till

twilight began to gather around him, and he was rather surprised to find himself on London Bridge. He felt tired, and leaned over the parapet, with his eyes fixed on the dark waters flowing beneath him; all the stories he had heard of those who had found oblivion to their woes in the depths of the Thames came back to his memory, and he was solely tempted to add one more to the dark catalogue of its victims.

"Brother in sorrow, why are you here? What do you meditate?—suicide? Have I found another man as wretched as myself? If so, let us be friends."

Startled by this singular address, Oliver looked around, and by the waning light saw a slender, dark-haired man, who might have been a few years older than himself. He was respectably dressed, and had the air of a gentleman, but there was an expression of weariness on his face, and a startled look in his eyes.

"Give up the thought of going down among the fishes, at least for to-night. Come with me; I do not fare sumptuously, but I have a shelter, and wherewithal to entertain one who seems as sorely at odds with fortune as I am myself."

At such a moment any expression of sympathy was welcome to the unhappy outcast, and he at once held out his hand and said:

"I will go with you, for I have no home of my own to return to."

"I am poor myself, but I have a fellow-feeling for one who seems to be in the same predicament. Let us be moving; we shall not have very far to go."

After crossing the bridge, the stranger suddenly dived into a shabby lodging-house and sprang up a dirty staircase, motioning to his companion to follow him.

"I don't often entertain company, but I am always prepared. Ha! ha! I should have been a jolly fellow if fate hadn't given me the strangest lot that ever fell to a poor devil. You, doubtless, think yourself unhappy and ill-used, but your troubles can be nothing to mine—nothing!"

"So every man thinks of his own burden," gloomily replied Oliver.

His host cast a keen glance upon him, and, for an instant, the startled look in his eyes deepened, but he presently cried out, with reckless glee:

"A truce to care for one night, at least. Let us eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we—know not what may happen."

"After what has happened to me to-day, I scarcely feel in the humour for a carouse to-night. You must excuse my taking more wine."

"Come, open your heart to me; tell me what has happened to take the manhood out of you so far as to bring you to the verge of self-destruction."

His abruptness made Oliver recoil from the proposed confidence. He coldly said:

"Excuse me; my sorrows are my own, and I will not trouble a stranger with them."

"A stranger, am I? Well, yes—perhaps that is true, but brethren in misfortune need not remain strangers to each other. Do you wish to hear my story?"

"I shall be very glad to hear all that you may choose to tell me of yourself."

"Well, here goes. My name, to begin with, is Eugène Ledru. My family is not aristocratic; my father was only a respectable hairdresser in the great city of Paris. My mother was a pretty English nurserymaid, whose acquaintance he made in the garden of the Tuilleries. He fell in love with her, and married her the next week. I was their only child, and after the death of my parents I was left to my own resources. I had a taste for travelling, and so I adopted the profession of a courier. I have travelled over nearly the whole of Europe, and have been mixed up in some strange adventures. But they are too piquant to relate in this laconic manner, so I shall reserve them for another time. There—you have my biography in a nut-shell."

"Now I will advise you how to economize your little fund. There is a room opposite to this, which is unoccupied; the tenant left two days ago; you had better take it."

"Where shall I find the landlord?"

"He lives in the right hand room on the first floor, and he will be sure to be in at this hour."

Oliver descended to the sanctum of the landlord as one walking in a dream.

He found the door, and on tapping at it, a rough voice cried out:

"Come in!"

"An' what might you want, young sprig o' gentility? for such as you don't often come to sick a den as mine."

"I wish to engage one of the rooms in your attic," was the courteous reply.

As he spoke he tendered the four shillings Ledru had told him would be the price of the apartment.

The man regarded him keenly, and said:

"Hoity-toity! who told you that was my charge?"

"I have just been with the gentleman who lodges

in the opposite room, and he told me the amount I must offer."

"Hum! much he knows about my business. His room looks back, and yours is in front; so it is worth to me a shilling a week more than the other."

Oliver submitted to the extortion, feeling a keen pang at the thought that he was brought so low as this.

He slept but little that night, and with the next morning his new existence commenced.

How dreary, how hopeless it was.

Ledru regarded him strangely:

"Do you know that a sudden thought has struck me? We are like each other. If your hair were darkened a few shades you might pass for me very well. I'll tell you a secret, *mon ami*. I can't bear this life much longer. I can't live like a rat in a hole, and I mean to shuffle off this mortal coil before many more such days pass over me as these last ones have been. What do you say to being made my heir? I have a banker's book, and placed to my credit no less a sum than two thousand pounds. What do you say to that, now?"

"I think that you are very kind to speak of leaving me so much, but I prefer that you shall live to enjoy it yourself. If you are not safe here, why do you not go elsewhere? The world is surely wide enough to afford you a hiding-place, since it seems necessary for you to conceal yourself."

"No, no—it is not wide enough to conceal me from those who vindictively pursue me," he cried out, with despairing emphasis. "If I dared I would tell you my secret; but I cannot. I swore a terrific oath, which must be held sacred."

When he grew more composed, Oliver ventured to say:

"If I could pass myself off for you, it would, it seems to me, only be taking on myself a burden that you find to be intolerable. Pray calm yourself, my dear friend."

"My parents are dead," said Ledru. "and I am not aware that I have a relation on earth. I like you—I pity you, and I wish you to be benefited by the money, which I swear to you was honestly gained. Promise me this—I am in great danger, and if anything fatal happen to me, you will take possession of my effects. Disguise yourself so far as to personate me for a brief season, and draw my funds from the bank. You can then resume your own identity, the clue will be broken, and the wretches who have hunted me to destruction will be baffled. I can even laugh at their fury when they find that I have evaded them at last."

When he found that Oliver was seriously alarmed at the state of his mind, Ledru changed his manner, and began to laugh and jeer at his own folly, and insisted on having a jolly night, and in defiance of Oliver's objections, brought from his room several bottles of wine.

Never before had Oliver seen his strange friend in such spirits, and when they parted at a late hour both seemed to have forgotten the dreary outburst which preceded this hilarity.

When he awoke the sun was shining in his window, and he hastened to dress himself. When he approached his table to seek the roll of bread which of late was the only breakfast he could afford, he found a bottle of wine with the seal still unbroken, and around it was a strip of paper, on which was written, in Ledru's hand:

"Drink this, then come to my room. Enter without knocking. I shall leave the door unbolted that you may do so. If no one is before you, you will know what fate means you to profit by. Remember my words last night, and act on them. No one can possibly question my right to dispose of my own as I please."

E. L.

The sudden shock that thrilled through his frame completely unnerved poor Oliver, and for an instant he stood as if transfixed. Arousing himself from his trance of doubt and horror, he rushed across the narrow hall, and throwing open the door of Ledru's room, entered it with a trembling heart and paling cheek.

The sight that met his eyes was almost maddening to one of his nervous organization; but he uttered no cry, gave no alarm—he was too much paralyzed to attempt either.

The broad light of day fell through the open window upon a stark form that lay across the foot of the bed, with its head so shattered by the pistol with which the unfortunate man had blown out his brains, that his nearest friend could not possibly have identified him.

The whole conversation came back to him, and as his own self-control returned the temptation assailed him to accept the legacy tendered him by Ledru and lose his own identity in that of the suicide.

After half an hour of confused thought, Oliver arose and bolted the door of the room to secure himself from interruption, though there was little chance

of that, for visitors never came to the tenants of this miserable attic.

Beside the dead man lay a book, on which was a note addressed to Oliver, and to trace those lines had evidently been the employment of his last moments. With a strange feeling of exultation, mingled with dread, he took it up and glanced over these lines:

"Oliver Darval, I make you my heir. It will save you many legal formalities and much trouble to assume my identity for a brief space till the money is safe in your possession. Afterwards you can be guided by your own wishes in resuming your own name; but I would not advise you to wear mine longer than is necessary to secure the legacy. I can no longer bear the burden of life, and I die with my secret yet untold."

E. LEDRU.

The clothing of the dead man lay upon a chair beside the bed, and Oliver proceeded slowly and tremulously to exchange his own garments for them. This accomplished, he opened the trunk of the deceased and found there the means of colouring his hair and darkening his complexion to the bronze hue of Ledru's.

Though the transformation was done awkwardly enough, he was startled by the effect when he looked into the small mirror that hung beside the window. He acknowledged that he certainly looked enough like the suicide to enable him to pass as his counterfeit, and he began to congratulate himself on the resemblance which would be the means of placing him above want.

On examining the banker's book, he found cheques already signed for the full amount deposited by Ledru, and with them was a second note urging him to secure the money and use it as his own.

This was scarcely needed now, for he had already made up his mind that in his desperate circumstances it was the only course for him to pursue.

Oliver thrust the pocket-book in his breast, and considered what was next to be done. He went back to his own room, and brought from it his valise with his name upon it; he took from it several loose poems written by himself and scattered them over the table; then hastily packing up every article belonging to Ledru, he carried the trunk into his own apartment.

The next consideration was how he should remove it. Again he examined his changed appearance in the mirror, and concluded that he would be quite safe in venturing out in his new character.

After locking Ledru's door and securing the key, with much internal trepidation he descended into the street.

He soon found a person suited to his purpose; together they returned to his lodgings, and ascended the stairs.

Without daring to glance at the closed door, Oliver passed rapidly to his own apartment, and, pointing out the trunk, bade the man carry it down.

As he gained the lowest floor, the cobbler suddenly darted out of his sanctum and sharply said:

"What! going away, monseigneur. It's rather sudden, ain't it? for you only paid my rent yesterday, and you said nothing about giving up the room."

"No, I did not know then that I should be so suddenly summoned away; you will find Mr. Darval in my room, as I have given him the rent that is due, and you can let his den to some other person; the back room suits him best, as it is cheaper than the other. Good-morning, Mr. Figgins; I hope you will soon find another lodger."

Oliver took his way to the august edifice known as the Bank of England.

As he drew near he descried a tall, severe-looking man coming towards him, in whom he instantly recognized his Uncle James. His eyes were bent down and his face looked careworn and anxious.

When they were almost in contact with each other Mr. Tilson suddenly looked up, and started as he glanced at Oliver's face, but the olive complexion and dark hair baffled him, though the air and figure were certainly those of his nephew.

Mr. Tilson made a slight, bewildered pause and then passed on. Oliver drew a long breath and stepped beneath the portal which might be that of doom to him. But, to his intense relief, he met with no difficulty.

The cheques were presented, the signatures found correct, and although the clerk glanced up as if surprised when he demanded the whole sum deposited, he did not scan his figure very closely, and in a few moments Oliver came out with a roll of notes in his breast pocket.

The last few weeks of his life seemed like a terrible nightmare from which he was only now awakening, and with a thankful heart he went to an hotel to get a good dinner, for he had tasted no food for the whole of that exciting day.

In Ledru's pocket-book he had found small change for ten pounds, and there was as yet no necessity for touching any portion of his little fortune.

Congratulating himself on having so cleverly secured it, Oliver ordered a nice little dinner, with a bottle of his favourite wine, and took up a paper while waiting for its appearance.

At a neighbouring table was a tall, grave-looking man looking over a German newspaper, but from the moment Oliver came in his attention was entirely bestowed on him, though he evidently watched him furtively.

Behind the shelter of his paper this person took from his pocket a scrap of writing which he conned over attentively, and then with a look of satisfaction arose and moved towards the door.

A keen-looking man was standing near it, to whom the dark stranger whispered a few words to the effect that he was not to lose sight of the foreign gentleman, as he believed he was the person they had been looking for.

The man nodded and remained on duty.

In the meantime, Oliver leisurely ate his dinner and sipped his wine, when he was startled by an advertisement on which his eyes accidentally fell.

It ran thus:

"If Eugene J. — will communicate with his old friend Berthold, he will find it greatly to his advantage. A chance to improve his fortune is offered, which, this time, it is hoped he will not refuse."

Oliver's heart sank within him as these words met his eyes, but his perturbation would have been yet greater had he known that the appearance of this very advertisement had driven the unhappy Ledru to suicide.

But Oliver was unhappily ignorant of what he had incurred by assuming, even for a day, the identity of another man, and until this moment he had not seriously feared any difficulty under his assumed name.

He arose abruptly, and ascended to his own room.

When securely locked in, he hastily set himself to the task of examining the effects of his deceased friend.

The disguises Ledru had used were found under a false bottom in the trunk, and above them was a respectable supply of linen and wearing-apparel.

A dressing-case contained the chemical agents with which he changed the hue of his hair and complexion, and in a drawer beneath it he found a package of papers carefully sealed, and labelled "Private."

For a few moments he hesitated whether he should destroy them without examination, but the keen curiosity he felt to fathom the mystery of the dead man's life finally induced him to break the seal and look over the contents of the parcel.

To his extreme disappointment, he found that they consisted of letters written in German, with which language he was entirely unfamiliar, but he saw from the dates that they had been written within the last five years.

Disappointed and annoyed at the result of his investigation, he sat moodily regarding the letters, when a knock came to his door which startled him from his unpleasant reverie. He hastily threw back the contents of the dressing-case, and closed the trunk; this done, in a state of extreme trepidation, he went to the door and opened it.

A waiter presented him with a card, on which was written, in French:

"Mr. Berthold Brauner desires to speak a few moments with M. Ledru. He has something of importance to communicate."

This, then, was the Berthold who had advertised; it was very evident that he was an acquaintance of the deceased man, and had actually traced him thus far. Oliver knew that if they met, detection would be inevitable—detection which now must end in ruin to himself, probably to a disgraceful death, and the cold dew gathered on his brow at the mere thought of the strat in which he had so recklessly plunged himself.

"Mr. Brauner must excuse me this evening. I am quite indisposed, and about to retire, but I will see him to-morrow at as early an hour as he may name."

His pallor, and the tremulous eagerness of his manner, caused the waiter to put faith in his plea of illness, and he retired, to return with the compliments of Mr. Brauner, and an intimation that he would call again at ten the next morning.

Resolved not to await this interview, Oliver at once made up his mind as to the only course that was open to him. He must make his escape from London, regain his own appearance, and, as Mr. Darvel, seek a new home in some far-distant land.

He took from the trunk a gray wig and whiskers, and a suit of dark cloth, with a wide, loose coat, which would effectually conceal his figure. These were soon donned, the letters which had so much excited his curiosity were thrust into one of his capacious pockets. His money was next secured, and watching his opportunity, when the spy who had been placed over him to watch his move-

ments, was off guard for a few moments, Oliver made good his evasion, closed the door of his room softly, and passed slowly and cautiously down the staircase, passing a sturdy-looking man at the entrance, who gave him a broad stare, but permitted him to pass unmolested into the street.

Had Oliver known that this was the formidable Brauner himself, he might have faltered a little, and thus drawn suspicion upon himself, but fortunately for him, he had no knowledge of that person, so he passed the danger with a bold front.

The man watched him as he walked away and muttered:

"No, it ain't one o' his dodges. That fellow don't plant his feet like Ledru. I am certain that I should know him through any disguise."

Oliver went on with the feeling a man soon acquires under such circumstances, and he began to regret the sense of freedom he lost when he undertook to play this tortuous game, so unsuited to his nature and antecedents.

How his difficulties were to end he could not at present see, but he made up his mind that after looking once more, by stealth, upon the face of his lost love, he would lose no time in seeking safety in some foreign land.

Towards dusk, he entered a decent house near the Temple, in which he knew lodgings were to be let. He found a vacant room, engaged it for a week, and paid the rent in advance, a proceeding which quite satisfied the landlady of his respectability.

Thinking it expedient to drop the name of Ledru, he called himself Mr. Oliver. Next morning he saw in large capitals the words, "Supposed Suicide," followed by the following announcement:

"Yesterday morning, a low lodging-house near the banks of the river was the scene of great excitement, on account of a suicide, or murder, it is impossible to determine which, that has taken place in it under most mysterious circumstances."

"The house is owned by a cobbler named Figgins, who let his two attic rooms to a couple of young men, who appeared to be on the most friendly terms with each other. Two days ago one of them, calling himself Eugene Ledru, suddenly left the house, telling the landlord that he had given his room up to his comrade, the week's rent of which had been already paid, at the same time saying that Mr. Darvel's room would be at his disposal."

"Figgins thought nothing more of it till he noticed that Darvel did not descend as regularly as before, and on yesterday morning it occurred to him that something might be wrong. He went up, found the door of his room locked, and after repeated knockings could get no response."

"He then summoned assistance, had the lock picked, and a most shocking scene was disclosed to those who entered the room. Its unhappy occupant was lying upon his bed quite dead, his head and face so dreadfully mutilated by the pistol with which his brains had been blown out that his nearest friend must have found it impossible to recognize him."

"The name of this unfortunate was, as we have said, Oliver Darvel, and it is stated that he has relations who might have prevented this sad catastrophe had their liberality been equal to their means."

The reader drew a deep breath of relief, with which some regret was mingled, as he muttered:

"So the play is ended. They will believe me dead, and Mabel can now indeed feel herself free to bestow her hand upon another."

His eyes moved down the column and paused, as if fascinated, at a second paragraph on the late suicide. It ran thus:

"Since the above was in print, some new developments have been made, which tend to throw a doubt on the fact that the unfortunate Darvel committed the crime of self-murder. The surgeons who were called in declared that the position in which the hand that grasped the pistol was found indicated that the wound was self-inflicted; but Mr. Figgins has stated that when Eugene Ledru left his house so suddenly he suspected that something had gone wrong with him."

"It seems that this Ledru is a suspicious person, and the police have been in pursuit of him for several weeks. He must be a practised hand, for he coolly evaded the watch set upon him when he entered an hotel, and through the carelessness of the man left in charge of this probable criminal, he has been suffered to escape the clutches of the law."

A cold dew burst out on Oliver's brow as he read, and he began dimly to see the dangerous position in which he had placed himself by the rash assumption of another's identity.

In his ignorance of life, and the way its business is managed, he had imagined that nothing would be easier than to secure his strange legacy, seek some secluded nook in which he could live under an assumed name, and never more cross the path of those who had so cruelly used him.

But now he found himself identified with a man who was a known offender against the laws, and he might be hunted down as that unfortunate being had been, till, for him also, no refuge but suicide was left.

CHAPTER III.

MABEL TILSON arose from her bed of suffering to learn that Oliver had acted with such insolent ingratitude towards his Uncle James that he could no longer keep him under the same roof with himself.

He had taken his fate in his own hands, and whither he had gone, or where concealed himself, his uncle seemed neither to know nor care.

But such was not in reality the case with James Tilson. He missed the object of his daily oburgations more than he would have been willing to confess, and he reflected with a grave sense of uneasiness on the friendless and nearly penniless condition in which his nephew had been cast out into the wilderness of London to take care of himself.

In spite of his hardness to Oliver Darvel, and the little consideration with which he habitually treated him, Tilson was, in his way, really fond and proud of his nephew, and he began to dread inexpressibly that some terrible calamity had befallen him.

When he entered the room in which Mabel awaited him, he rightly interpreted the look of eager inquiry with which she regarded him.

"Oh, Uncle James!" she breathlessly exclaimed, "is—it is really true that my poor Oliver has never been heard of since—since the day I was at your house? You must lately have heard something, or you would scarcely have come here now?"

Tilson shook his head gloomily.

"Mabel sank on a seat, pale and tremulous. After a moment she asked:

"Have you made any effort to trace him, uncle?"

"I have done all that could be quietly effected, but with no result."

She covered her face with her hands, and sobbed aloud.

"Hush, hush—you will unnerve me, and make me unfit for action, if you go on so. But here comes John in good time; perhaps he can suggest something I have not thought of."

Mr. Tilson came in with an expression of surprise on his face. With a sort of surly hospitality he said:

"You here, James? I am glad to see you, though after what lately passed between us I hardly expected you to visit me. Sit down, sit down."

"Thank you, John. I cannot stay many more moments, so I will say what I came for at once. I wish to consult you on a subject that is nearer to my heart than you may imagine. Do you know that I have heard nothing from our nephew since that evening you and Mabel were at my house?"

His brother answered with his usual straightforward hardness:

"If I was in your place, I should leave him in his strait till he extricates himself from it by hard, honest work. We had to labour when we were of his age."

"Umph!" but there's a difference you don't seem to take account of, John. We were brought up to work, and we knew that our living depended on our own industry. But Oliver has been trained and educated as the son of a gentleman. He is as ignorant of business affairs as a child."

"I've washed my hands of him, and I don't intend that me or mine shall have anything more to do with him."

"Oh, father, how can you speak in such terms of poor Oliver?" gasped Mabel, and her uncle, for once angry and indignant at hearing his nephew abused, bitterly said:

"I might have known that you would do nothing to assist me to recover the lad; but I'll find him, and soon, too, and I mean to leave him every penny I am worth. I'll make my will at once, for at my age there's no knowing what may happen."

"You're welcome to do so as far as I am concerned."

"So Mabel has consented to marry Denton, then? If he knows the cause of her late illness he is easily satisfied, I must say; but he is a shrewd man, and he doubtless understands his own affairs best."

He uttered these words with a sneering emphasis, but a glance at poor Mabel made him regret them.

She looked deprecatingly towards her father as she replied:

"It is my intention to speak the whole truth, Uncle James; and I may assure you now that nothing will ever tempt me to give my hand where my heart does not go with it."

"If that means that you will not marry the man I have chosen for you, you shall no longer be a daughter of mine," thundered John Tilson.

"Let Mabel alone, John, till her health and spirits are better, and then talk to her about your plans."

She isn't strong, and if your heart be set on making her Mrs. Denton, you had better take care of her."

"I am sure that I have shown my care by trying to do the best for her that I can. I've pledged my word, and Mabel must redeem it, or cease to look on me as her father."

While making this conclusive statement of the position of affairs, the brothers left the room; at the outer door they coldly shook hands.

Mr. Tilson shut himself up in his own room to reflect on the best course to pursue to recover some trace of his nephew; again the necessity of making his will pertinaciously pressed itself on his mind.

"It may be best to make all safe. I could not sleep in peace in my grave if I knew that John Tilson had gained possession of the greater part of the money I have laboured so hard to scrape together, always with one purpose—but one—to make that boy a gentleman, and a man of means, after I am gone. And now he's lost through my own fault, and he may never, never come back again. I must provide for that—yes, it is necessary to think of every contingency that may throw my fortune into my brother's hands. Anything but that—anything but that—I can bear."

Mr. Tilson rang a sharp peal on the bell, and the servant appeared.

He sent him for a Mr. Fisher, a cadaverous-looking young man, with a scanty supply of light hair, and pale blue eyes, who promptly made his appearance. He bowed nervously, and Mr. Tilson abruptly said:

"Sit down, if you please, Mr. Fisher. Here are pens, ink and paper; and I wish you to make my will out of hand. I'm a man of prompt action, and when I undertake to do a thing I want it attended to at once."

Mr. Fisher bowed, wrote the usual preamble, and read it aloud to the testator.

Mr. Tilson nodded and said:

"All right—and now for the substance of the thing."

He then went on to dictate the disposal of his real and personal estate, amounting in all to eighty thousand pounds. The principal portion of this wealth was in securities, as all the land he possessed was a small estate in Surrey, recently purchased. The place was a bijou in its way—a villa, built in the Italian style, near the banks of the Thames, with grounds around it embellished with exquisite taste and little regard to expense.

At his death, all of these possessions were bequeathed to Oliver Darvel, but settled in such a way that he had no power to alienate any of them, or dispose of them according to his own wishes. In default of the said Oliver Darvel or his heirs, the money and lands were to descend intact to the niece of the testator, Mabel Tilson, to be controlled by herself alone, and disposed of according to her own pleasure; the income arising from the estate, while she was under the authority of her father, to be used by her without any interference or dictation on his part.

To his brother he left a hundred pounds to purchase a mourning ring.

Having read over the document and found it all right, Mr. Tilson caused two other gentlemen, of good mercantile standing, who lodged in the house, to be summoned as witnesses to his signature.

He consulted with his friends on the best means of recovering his traitor's hair, and a programme was settled which, he flattered himself, must restore Oliver to the ease and prosperity he declared should be his future lot.

The three men listened with some surprise, for they, like all the other lodgers in the house, knew that young Darvel and his uncle were rarely on the best of terms, and at sundry times they had all heard to declare that it was shameful in Mr. Tilson to bear down so hardly upon his nephew as he constantly did.

They, however, consoled the repentant old sinner with the assurance that things must come right now, and Oliver be restored to the brilliant destiny designed for him.

(To be continued.)

A BOLD IDEA.—I have seen Oxford men smoking in the cabin of a steamer as they passed the finest scenery on the Rhine, and men fast asleep in the cabin as they passed the finest scenery on the Dart. The mention of the Rhine and the Dart recalls a curious anecdote which a distinguished friend just told me, which was well suited to questions both on self-deception and on the philosophy of travel. It is well known that in the west country the Dart is called the English Rhine. My friend met a Prussian gentleman on board the Dart steamer. The Prussian told him that he had heard the Dart called the English Rhine, and that he was now doing the Dart in order to judge of the truth of the comparison. My friend happened to remark that of course he knew the Rhine very well.

"Not in the least," was the reply; he had only passed it once on the railway at Cologne. But being a German, and knowing all about the character of the people, their history and literature, he could evolve the idea of the Rhine out of his own consciousness. Given the history and literature, the idea of the local scenery could always be evolved out of one's own internal being. "For instance," said the metaphysical German, "I have never been to Switzerland, yet I am perfectly acquainted with Swiss scenery." I am afraid his judgment would not be worth much on the mooted point respecting the Dart. One envies the facility with which an immense amount of travelling can be done without the inconvenient drawback of travelling expenses. It is a bold idea to supersede locomotion by the internal consciousness.—From "Religious Use of Travel," in *Religious Society*.

FACETIE.

It was said of a rich miser that he died of great want—the want of more money.

What are you always to-morrow what you can't be to-day?—Older.

Why are women extravagant in clothes?—Because when they buy a new dress they wear it out on the first day.

JACK CASTS HIS SHELL.

Belay with yer arguments, 'national law, Reconstruction and newspaper letters! We're game for a hornpipe, but oceans of jaw Won't induce us to dance it in fetters.

What's the good of them Navy Commissioners teak,

And the seven-inch plating and models, When a Palliser's able to spring you a leak, Though their armour's as thick as their noddies?

D'ye think behind plating we're willing to skulk, Which them Parliament lubbers delight in? Give us Palliser guns on an old wooden hulk— You may trust to us salts for the fightin'.

Let who will cast a shell, why, I'll stand to my gun,

But I'll cast my own first, without fail, boys— For we take off our jackets when work's to be done,

And that they'll take off theirs, I'll go bail, boys!

Our muscles are iron—our courage is steel, And its temper's been pretty well tried, boys— Keep the oak to the weather—it's used to the feel— Never fear, there'll be iron inside, boys!

Fun.

WHAT a suspicious monster the man must have been who first invented a lock, but what a trusting creature the woman who first allowed a latchkey.

A PHILOSOPHER, who married a vulgar but amiable girl, used to call his wife brown sugar, because she was sweet, but unrefined.

THERE is a man in Connecticut who has such a hatred to everything appertaining to a monarchy that he won't wear a crown on his hat.

LOVING.—Henry Ward Beecher says that to love he must have something to put his arms around. Well, that is a pleasant way of loving.

A PAPER, giving an account of Toulouse, says, "It is a large town, containing upwards of sixty thousand inhabitants built entirely of brick."

A LADY leaving home, was thus addressed by her little boy: "Mamma, will you remember and buy me a penny whistle, and let it be a religious one, that I can use it on Sunday."

SATISFIED AUTHOR.

A not over-successful Parisian dramatic author lately called for his piece in fifteen acts, which he had left six months before with the manager. After a search of half an hour, the old bundle was discovered, but, *hélas!* terribly rat-eaten!

"I regret, monsieur—" began the *régisseur*, apologetically, when returning the MS.

"Not at all—not at all," said the poor dramatist. "I am happy, at least, to see that my MS. has procured the means of someone dining well and frequently, if it has not done so for the author."

It is stated that the colour orange will be added to the two omers of the Prussian flag, which will thus become a tricolour—black, white, and orange. It should have been lemon, considering the squeeze there has been.

A QUIET family in the country were electrified the other day by the receipt of a telegraphic dispatch from a daughter who was teaching in a distant city. The telegram was passed around and duly admired. The dashing boldness of the chirography came in for its share of praise. The old lady shook her head with

an air of gratified pride as she ejaculated, slowly—"Ann Maria allers did write like a man; she's been takin' writin' lessons; this here beats her last letter all holler!"

A THIRSTY Kentish elector, at an inn, in Maidstone, shouted, "Waiter, bring me bitter beer!" "We can bring you a bit o' bread," said the waiter, "but not a bit o' beer!"

VERY LUCID.

During the assizes, in a case of assault and battery where a stone had been thrown by the defendant, the following clear and conclusive evidence was drawn out of a Yorkshireman:

"Did you see the defendant throw the stone?"

"I saw the stone, and I'm pretty sure the defendant throwed it."

"Was it a large stone?"

"I should say it wur a largish stone."

"What was its size?"

"I should say a sizable stone."

"Can't you answer definitely how big it was?"

"I should say it wur a stone of some bigness."

"Can't you give the jury some idea of the stone?"

"Why, as near as I recollect, it wur something of a stone."

"Can't you compare it, so as to give some notions of the stone?"

"I should say it wur as large as a lump of chalk!"

STRONG PROPENSITY.—A lady seeing her lover running in great haste to overtake her, observed to him that he must be in a very great hurry to run so fast. "Madam," replied the lover, "I was following my inclination."

A COUNTRY surgeon, who was bald, was visiting at a friend's house, whose servant wore a wig. After bantering him a considerable time, the doctor said, "You see how bald I am, and yet I don't wear a wig." To which the servant replied, "True, sir; but an empty barn requires no thatch."

A FRENCH father was recently trying to persuade a young ward to marry his daughter (the ward was very wealthy). He said, "She has talents even to her fingers' ends."—"I should prefer a thimble there." "She will be the best of literary wives."—"I should prefer the best of housewives." "She will go to posterity."—"I had much rather she would go to market."

NO PLACE LIKE LONDON.—The man who has a stake in the country writes to say that he is longing to get back to a chop in town.—*Punch*.

A SHOOTING QUEEN.

The *Post* lately contained the announcement following:

"The King and Queen of Denmark are expected to arrive at Marlborough House in the course of the ensuing week, from Denmark. Their Majesties will remain a fortnight in London, after which they go to Sandringham for pheasant shooting."

What, both of them? So it seems that the Queen of Denmark is a sportswoman. As such we hope that she will set an example in pheasant shooting; go out and kill pheasants fairly, and give no countenance to slaughtering them in a battue.—*Punch*.

A PASSING THOUGHT.—The great difference between the young and the old is this—the young have the world before them, whilst the old are behind the world.—*Punch*.

A WEIGHTY MATTER.

Strange are the stage wants we every week see advertised. For instance, look at this:

"Wanted, to Open on Saturday, September 13th, a Heavy Gentleman, who can play *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Richard the Third*, &c. Address, &c."

The verb "to open" is an active one. What then is the substantive omitted after "open" in the above establishment? Is it "doors," or "oysters," or "champagne bottles," or what? And pray why is a "heavy" gentleman required? Is it requisite to have a man of substance for *Othello*? Can a man not play *Macbeth* unless he be of certain weight? If so, how many pounds, pray, are deemed needful for the part? Surely the amount should have been precisely stated, so that applicants might go to scale before applying for the post. Suppose a heavy gentleman to have answered the advertisement, and been approved of by the manager, how awkward he would find it, while dressing for *Othello*, to be told he was too light to undertake the part! We often hear of actors being "overweighted." Do heavy gentlemen, we wonder, like jockeys in a handicap, strap belts of shot about them, to bring them to the right amount of heaviness required?—*Punch*.

A STATEMENT has appeared that there are annually 20,000 babies sent out of Paris to be brought up, and out of them only 5,000 ever return. Cold, starva-

tion, and bad treatment have done their work. In twenty years 300,000! This is a massacre of innocents horrible to hear of. The laxity of morality and of the law of France fail to touch the evil. Say two-thirds of the mothers yet live, and half of them still reside in Paris, and we have 100,000 women who ought to blush for their wickedness, if blushing is possible. That we in London show a disgraceful state of things must not be doubted, but efforts are being made to fight the evil, for it wants hard fighting to put down any sin or recklessness. The account of this matter goes on to state that those babies returned, or a great number of them, are changed by their nurses, who seem to have a sort of annual baby fair on their way back to Paris. Statistics would, therefore, show that during the last twenty years, perhaps half of the 100,000 have been changed, and at the present moment parents of 50,000 children are lavishing their caresses on the wrong children. Mayhap in this confusion, many, supposing they are caressing girls, are absolutely lavishing their tenderness on boys, for it is not said that these wretched nurses are careful to change sex for sex.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

It is said that wood can be rendered uninflam- mable by coating it with a preparation composed of a solution of potash thickened with clay.

RANCID BUTTER FOR COOKING.

Many persons sneer at the common notion that butter too rancid to be eaten raw upon bread may be used without objection in cooking; but this notion, like many other popular ideas, is more in accordance with the truth of the matter than the im- perfect knowledge which ridicules it.

All fats are compounds of acid with glycerine. Butter is a mixture of several fats, and one of them, constituting however only a small portion of its mass, is butyric; this is a compound of butyric acid with glycerine. Butyric, like other fats, is a neutral substance, but when it is decomposed—in other words, when the butyric acid is separated from the glycerine with which it is combined—we then have the two substances, the acid and the glycerine, exhibiting each its peculiar properties. Butyric is a very powerful acid, caustic and sour, and having that peculiar strong odour which is characteristic of rancid butter. One of the early steps in the decay of butter is the decomposition of the butyric, which is made manifest by the odour of the butyric acid set free, and by the sour and biting taste of this acid.

Now, at a temperature of 315 degrees, butyric acid is evaporated, hence it is only necessary to raise the temperature of the butter to this point in order to drive off the acid which makes it rancid, and to leave the remainder perfectly sweet. If rancid butter be mixed in cake, a portion of the butyric acid will be absorbed by the water in the cake, and it may not be all ex- pelled by the heat in baking; but if the butter be used for frying in an open pan, it is pretty certain that the butyric acid will all be evaporated. With a knowledge of the properties of butyric acid, a skilful cook ought to be able to use rancid butter in such ways as to retain none of the rancidity in the cooked articles.

SOMNAMBULISM EXTRAORDINARY.—At a farmhouse in the vicinity of Guildford a few evenings ago a large roll of butter was brought in at tea. The careful wife proceeded to cut the butter in two in order that one half of it might alone remain on the table. The knife grated upon something in the centre of the butter, and in the very heart of the lump she found a gold watch and chain very carefully rolled up, but not enveloped in paper or any other covering. At this juncture Sarah B—, the domestic, entered the room, and uttering a sharp exclamation, darted off again precipitately. Scarcely had the farmer time to remark upon Sarah's strange conduct than she returned, breathless with haste and anxiety, ejaculating, "It's mine, mum! It's mine!" Mrs. — remembered to have heard Sarah say that she had been left a gold watch and chain by a deceased relative, that she was always in terror of losing it, that she did not wear it, not being suitable to a person in her station of life, and that for safety she kept it locked up in her box under her clothes. Sarah declared that she had been in the habit, when under the influence of strong emotion, of walking in her sleep. On the previous Monday she had been reading in the news- paper some dreadful tales of burglary with violence. On the same night she had a most vivid dream. She thought that the house had been entered by burglars, and that she saw them through a chink in the door enter her master and mistress's room. She tried to scream, but could not, and although very anxious for her master and mistress's welfare, her thoughts seemed so revolt in spite of everything to the necessity of sav-

ing her watch. At length she dreamed that she had hit upon an expedient. She quietly got out of bed, un- locked her box, took out the watch, slipped on her dress, and softly glided downstairs and made her way to the dairy. She then took a roll of butter of the Saturday's making, wound the chain round the watch, and deftly inserted both watch and chain in the very centre of the butter, making up the roll precisely in the form that it was before. She then thought that she passed swiftly upstairs, and reached her room un- molested. On inspecting the watch found in the but- ter, she had no hesitation in declaring that it was hers! Farmer — and his wife accordingly handed over to Sarah B— the watch and chain.

TELL ME YES.

ONE little moment more, Maud;
One little whisper more;
I have a word to speak, Maud,
I never breathed before.
What can it be but love, Maud?
And do I rightly guess,
'Tis pleasant to your ear, Maud?
Oh, darling, tell me yes!

The burden of my heart, Maud,
There's little need to tell;
There's little need to say, Maud,
I've loved you long and well.
There's language in a sigh, Maud,
One's meaning to express;
And yours—was it for me, Maud?
Oh, darling, tell me yes!

My eyes have told my love, Maud;
And on my burning cheek
You've read the tender thought, Maud,
My lips refused to speak.
I gave you all my heart, Maud;
'Tis needless to confess;
And did you give me yours, Maud?
Oh, darling, tell me yes!

'Tis sad to starve a love, Maud,
So worshipping and true;
I know a little cot, Maud,
Quite large enough for two.
And you will be my wife, Maud?
So may you ever bless,
Through all your sunny life, Maud,
The day you answered yes!

J. G. S.

GEMS.

THE thinking man has wings; the acting man has only feet and hands.

GRIEF knits two hearts in closer bonds than happiness ever can; and common sufferings are far stronger links than common joys.

NO man is more nobly born than another unless he is born with better abilities and a more amiable dis- position.

NEVER be above your calling, or be afraid to appear dressed in accordance with the business you are performing.

WHENEVER we find a man who enjoys a wide popularity, we may be assured, however bad his re- putation may be, that he has some good qualities in an eminent degree.

THE first of all virtues is innocence; the next is modesty. If we banish modesty out of the world, she carries away with her half the virtue that is in it.

HE who cheats the man that confides in him, in a witty manner, makes us laugh at his jest, and half disarm our anger; but reflection soon insures him our contempt and indignation.

CARRY yourself respectfully towards your superiors, friendly towards your equals, condescendingly to- wards your inferiors, generously towards your enemies, and lovingly towards all.

THE capacity of purpose is as often the proof of folly as of wisdom. Examine the men who boast of never changing their opinions, and for every wise one among them whose opinions never needed altering, you will find a thousand fools blindly adhering to old prejudices because unable to comprehend the ever- changing world in which they live.

ST. CLEMENT'S CHURCHYARD has this summer borne not a few fragrant flowers. Now an attempt is being made to plant St. Paul's Churchyard with flowers also.

THE BUGLER'S HORSE.—There is, at the present moment, a favourite old dark chestnut horse in New- castle Barracks, attached to the 4th Hussars (Queen's Own) to which much interest is attached. He is

twenty-one years old, and was, during the Crimean war, ridden by the bugler of the above fine regiment. His rider having been shot off his back during an engagement, the animal was subsequently captured by the Russians, and taken to their quarters. Strange as it may appear, it is, however, no less true, that this sagacious horse, a few nights after his capture and imprisonment among the Russians, made a stampede, and returned to his old quarters, bringing with him between fifty and sixty horses from the Russian camp. Nearly the whole of the deserters were secured by the English soldiers, and used during the continuance of the war. This fine old horse, although advanced in years, is still retained in "The Queen's Own," where his duties, as may naturally be expected, are ex- tremely light and easy. He is a favourite with the whole of the men, which is scarcely to be wondered at when his interesting antecedents are taken into consideration.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE Prince and Princess of Wales will probably be present at the marriage of the Princess Dagmar, at St. Petersburg.

THERE is a report that an energetic effort will be made next season by the leaders of fashion in Paris to revive the practice of powdering the hair.

THE Melbourne and Hobson's Bay directors report an increase of 20 per cent. in the goods traffic of the past half-year.

WILLIAM MEAD died at Gillingham, in Dorset, on the 18th instant, at the age of 90. He fought in the battle of Waterloo, 51 years ago.

THE old buttery-hatch, with sides and head of Purbeck marble, has recently been discovered in the south wall of the refectory of Westminster Abbey.

THE composition of ancient bronzes was nearly always similar, namely, copper 88·67 grains, and 11·33 grains of tin.

THE process of grinding the speculum used with the Rosse telescope occupied six weeks. A small steam- engine furnished the motive power for the operation.

AN ordinary blast furnace making white iron re- quires nearly 7,500 cubic feet of air per minute, or it consumes 2,318 tons of our atmosphere in every week.

PLANTS grown under the light of the electric lamp show that their green colour is equally capable of being produced under the influence of such light as under that of the sun.

IN a life of fifty years a man makes upwards of 500 millions of respirations, drawing through his lungs nearly 170 tons' weight of air, and discharging nearly 20 tons' weight of carbonic acid.

IN the courts of the Welsh sovereigns the king's smith sat next to the domestic chaplain, and he was entitled to a draught of every kind of liquor that was brought into the hall.

IT has been calculated that, to ventilate a room effectually, every person requires ten cubic feet of fresh air per minute; a church, therefore, 80 ft. long, 50 ft. wide, and 40 ft. high, and containing 1,000 persons, would require the whole atmospheric con- tents to be renewed every sixteen minutes.

THE CHANGE OF LEAVES.

THE cause of the beautiful tint which our foliage assumes during the autumnal months has long been a subject of investigation, and many are the hypo- theses that have been put forth in explanation.

M. Frémy, who has devoted considerable attention to this subject, stated, as the result of a series of ex- periments, that he had succeeded in resolving the green colouring matter of the leaf (chlorophyll) into two components, one, a yellowish substance he called phylloxanthine, the other a blue matter for which he proposed the name phyllocyanine. By considering the blue as more evanescent, the different shades of yellow leaves might be produced.

These views were generally accepted till recently, when Frémy has again appeared, essentially retract- ing his original views. He now gives, as the result of subsequent experiments, the new supposition that chlorophyll is a simple green colouring matter very unfixed, being influenced by vegetation, thus passing through varied modifications.

M. Carey Lea has lately advanced a theory in which he considers light as the primary cause, producing photographic changes of colour.

During the healthy state of the leaf vitality coun- teracts this influence, but as the fall approaches the frost begins its work; the petioles dry up, the leaf gradually loses its firm hold upon the branch, then the action of light, no longer held in check by the vital principle, predominates, the leaf falls away, but in fading acquires those brilliant hues that will soon variegated our forests.

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THE FORTUNE-TELLER	HOUSEHOLD TREASURES
OF THE RHINE	SOMNAMBULISM EXTRACTED
MAUD'S ORDEAL	DINARY
THE WRONG DRESS	TELL ME YES
MEMOIRS	GRUB
YANKEE	THE ROGUE'S HORSE
THE HOUSE OF SECRETS	THE CHANGE OF LEAVES
A SOLAR HALO	MISCELLANEOUS
SCIENCE	
NEW MODE OF PURIFY-	
ING WATER	
A NEW BREACH-LOADING	
NEEDLE RIFLE	
INDUSTRIAL EXHIBITIONS	
MODERN HAWKING-COST	
TUNE IN FRANCE	
OLIVER DANIEL	
A BOLD LOBO	
PACIFIC	

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

S. K.—On the Pier at Hyde is, we regret to say, not suitable for our columns.

ROSE.—The marriage will be legal, unless both parties were aware of one being married in a wrong name.

P. J. M., seventeen, well off, and good looking. Respondent must be about sixteen, with a fortune of 6000.

VIVIAN.—The first telegraph erected in England was on the 28th of January, 1796.

HIBERNIAN.—The Union Act for Ireland passed July 2, 1800, and took place January 1, 1801.

LOTTIE, eighteen, tall, dark, hazel eyes, black curly hair, good teeth, good looking, lively, and good tempered.

LIZZIE.—An onion and a small piece of cheese is very good for digestion, but if "Lizzie" suffers much she should consult a medical man.

CATHERINE, twenty, a blonde, chestnut hair, good teeth and complexion, blue eyes, a good figure, and some money; would prefer a sailor.

NELLY.—Sleep a few bay leaves in a small quantity of the best rum, keeping the vessel well covered for, say, a couple of days, when it will be fit for use.

CIVIL, well educated, and with large expectations. Respondent must be about seventeen or eighteen, well educated, pretty, and of good family.

GUILHELMUS.—The name "William" is derived from the Dutch, and was originally "Gwid Helm"—harnessed with a gilded helmet.

HARRIET ANSELL, forty-four, dark hair and complexion, nice eyes, and Roman nose; money no object. Respondent must be a foreigner about her own age.

DRAGON TRAVEL.—The cholera first appeared in Edinburgh July 6, 1832, and in London the 14th of the same month.

ROSE and LILLIE.—"Rose," dark, very good looking, and rather tall; "Lillie," fair, very pretty, and of middle height. Both highly accomplished, and with moderate incomes.

A LOVER OF ART.—Lucas Van Leyden was a Dutch painter in oil, also an engraver. His great picture was the History of St. Hubert.

MARY and JANE, both tall, fair, good tempered, very industrious, and will make kind and loving wives. Respondents must be two tall working men.

T. H. D.—Books on law may be procured at either of the booksellers in Carey Street, Lincoln's Inn, books on medicine of Messrs. Churchill, New Burlington Street.

NELLY, nineteen, blonde, blue eyes, hair the fashionable colour without any dye in it, considered very pretty, and will have a dowry of 1,000 on her marriage. A railway clerk preferred.

GEORGE.—Janissaries is derived from two Turkish words, *servant* and *schir*, implying "new soldiers" (a Turkish militia), created by Amurath I. for the purpose of defending the throne, and acting on the frontiers of the kingdom.

MARY MORGAN, twenty, fair, gray eyes, light brown hair, good tempered, and very industrious. Respondent must be a true-hearted working man; a widower not objected to, from thirty to forty.

A SUBSCRIBER.—The tale you name is not published in volume form. When completed, however, if you send the necessary postage stamps, with an address, our publisher will forward the number you require.

DRAMATICS.—Michael John Sedaine was a French dramatic writer, wrote several comic operas and plays. Some have been translated into English, such as "Richard Coeur de Lion" and "Blue Beard."

A CUNT, not good looking, hair of a bright hue, about 5 ft. 10 in. in height, and not ungainly in figure, with an income of 1800 a year. Respondent must be a dark and handsome woman, about twenty, fortune would be an object, but not a necessary addition.

H. GRABSON.—Orrie root used moderately is not injurious; far better, however, to ascertain by application to a medical man the cause of your requiring it. It may arise from some disarrangement of the system which it is in the power of medical science to remove.

JACK and JEM.—"Jack" is twenty-three, good looking, and a foreman in a large brewery. "Jem" is a butcher, and going into business on his own account, very handsome, but rather shy. Ladies responding must be between nineteen and twenty.

RESPONDENT.—The old English custom by "banns" is, decidedly, the more many choices for marriage. Marriage in England is, in the eye of the law, essentially a public ceremony. It can only be performed in churches, in registered chapels, in Quakers' meeting-houses, in synagogues—that is, in some recognized place of public worship—and in the office of the superintendent registrar. To render the contract which is made in the registrar's office valid, six persons must be present: the superintendent registrar, the marriage registrar, two credible witnesses, the bridegroom, and the

bride. The superintendent registrar receives the declarations, the registrar records the particulars of the transaction, and all six persons sign the register. In registered chapels the minister or the priest takes the place of the superintendent registrar; the presence of the marriage registrar is indispensable. The registrar is not present at marriages in churches of the Establishment. 2. The special license of the Archbishop of Canterbury allows marriages to be solemnized "at any convenient time or place." 3. Gretna Green marriages were rendered illegal, and so stopped, by Lord Brougham's Act, which came into operation on the 1st of January, 1857.

W. H. WATSON.—Commissions in the Royal Navy are not to be purchased. A captain in the R.N. could give you a nomination, but you would have to pass an examination in the ordinary branches of education, also in navigation.

A MUSICIAN.—There has been much controversy as to who was the composer of the music and who was the author of the words of "God Save the King." It is pretty generally, however, believed that it was composed by Dr. John Bull, in 1687, for King James I.

W. B., twenty. The young lady must be the same age—a little younger preferred. She must be good looking, with a small income, well educated, and thoroughly domesticated. "W. B." is dark, rather tall, and considered by some to be good looking.

ADVICE.—The last and best recipe given for whitening the hands is as follows: A wineglassful of Eau de Cologne, and one of lemon juice, two cakes of brown Windsor soap, mixed well together, when hard, will form an excellent substance.

AN ENQUIRY.—"Tout est," entirely so: "Mari," husband; "Père," father; "Tout au contraire," quite the reverse; "Orde experto," believe an expert, i.e., trust to the experienced. The other phrases of which you ask explanation are misquoted.

PEEPING THROUGH THE BLINDS.

In place of books, or work, or play,
Some ladies spend the livelong day
In scanning every passer-by,
And many a wonder they desire:
They find among the motley crowd
That some are gay, that some are proud;
That some are short, and some are tall—
They get their information all.
By peeping through the blinds!

You walk the streets (a common pace),
You catch the outline of a face;
The face seems strange, again you look;
Dear sir, she knows you like a book:
She knows the colour of your hair,
The very style of clothes you wear.
She knows your business, I'll be bound,
And all your friends the country round.
By peeping through the blinds!

She knows the Smiths across the way,
And what they did on every day.
And thinks that their Matilda Jane
Is growing very proud and vain!
She knows the Browns at Number Four,
Just opposite her very door;
Folks quite as poor as they can be,
For don't they sit and sew, while she
Is peeping through the blinds!

Dear ladies, if you don't succeed
In gaining knowledge that you need,
Then at the window take your seat,
And gaze into the busy street;
Full soon you'll read your neighbours' wail,
And can their tastes and habits tell.
And know their business to a T,
Much better than your own, you see.
By peeping through the blinds!

M. A. K.

POLITICS.—You are correct. It is almost incredible to the present generation that so recently as the year 1810 the late William Cobbett was sentenced to two years' imprisonment, and fined 1,000*l.* for defending English soldiers from being flogged under a guard of Germans.

HARRY HARVEY, twenty-one, 5 ft. 5 in. in height, good looking, a cheerful disposition, fond of home, of studious habits, and holds a clerkship of about 50*l.* per annum, with an increasing salary. Respondent must be eighteen or twenty, about 5 ft. 3 in. in height, cheerful, and domesticated.

A CONSTANT READER.—Commissions in the Royal Artillery and Engineers are only given to those who have been educated at the military college; to which a youth must first, by interest, obtain a nomination, and his friends be prepared to pay the expenses of his college career. Your handwriting is so indifferent that it would prove an obstacle.

EDWARD E., twenty, in the Royal Navy, and at twenty-one entitled to 400*l.* when he will retire from the service. "E. E." has brown hair, large hazel eyes, very good looking, about 5 ft. 6 in. in height, pleasant disposition, and very respectably connected. Respondent must be eighteen, fond of home and music.

A SAILOR.—I. At fifteen, and not having been trained in a naval school, we think you are too old to obtain a berth as a "boy." 2. To obtain a "boy's berth" in a gentleman's yacht advertise in the *Times* or the *Field*. 3. Consult the advertising columns of the *Times*; scarcely a day passes that shipowners do not advertise for midshipmen and boys, stating the premium required.

LIZIE and EMMA.—"Lizie," nineteen, medium height, hazel eyes, brown curling hair, rosy cheeks, a very fine figure, and 200*l.* a year. "Emma," seventeen, light brown hair, laughing blue eyes, very domesticated, and will come into considerable property when twenty-one. Respondents must be dark and handsome, about twenty-one; if following professions preferred.

BLUE VIOLET would be glad to find some gentleman who will cherish the gentle flower in his bosom through life. She is petite and well formed, men eighteen summers, very fair, flowing light hair, which she is told surpasses her head in molten gold, her complexion resembles a Lily, with a rose bud reposing on each cheek; curved, pencilled-like eyebrows, eyes deep and blue as the ocean, with lashes sweeping her cheeks, a Grecian nose, which surpasses description, coral

lips, which frequently expose the pearly gems which they should shield, and a small dimpled chin. Money is not required with a partner, as she has become tired of the monotony of so many wealthy admirers. N.B.—This description of "Violet" was given her by a disinterested friend.

MARROW.—The following is an infallible cure for a simple ulcerated sore-throat: Dissolve a teaspoonful of chloride of potash in a tumbler of water and gargle with it. It is nearly tasteless, and not at all offensive to take, and well adapted to children. A weak solution of the same is also an excellent remedy for chapped or cracked hands. Any druggist will supply you with it.

J. H. was apprenticed to a firm of several partners. All retire from the firm, but one carries on the business. The apprentice may insist upon the masters' covenants being fulfilled by the one member still carrying on the business; but if this be not done, he may recover damages against all the members of the original firm. The dissolution of the partnership does not set aside the apprenticeship indenture.

A SUFFRAGER.—A good test for poisonous paper-hangings is common spirit of hartshorn, or ammonia is a sure one for arsenic. On application the beautiful but dangerous green turns to a blue. The existence of arsenic in rooms hung with green paper may also be detected immediately by lighting a bit of the suspected paper at a candle. When the paper is well lighted, blow it out, then smell the smoke; if it contain arsenic, the smell will be that of garlic.

CORRUPT very curiously indeed, as the reason why the lions are not placed round Nelson's Monument, in Trafalgar Square, as they have been so many years in hand. The nation at large, through the Press, has often asked the same question. Perhaps, however, if "Curious" call at Baron Marchetti's studio, in Brompton, and Sir Edwin Landseer happen to be at work, the courteous and illustrious painter will give him the desired information.

COLOUR OF HAIR.—"Lizzie," pale red; we cannot give you a safe recipe; apply to a hair-dresser—"Lillian," a light brown—"Flora," dark brown—"Santa Hilda," very pretty golden.

HANDWRITING.—"Heartsease," very bad indeed; pray take a few lessons—"A Sailor," very good—"Boss," very good, but with a good pen it would be better—"A Victim of Love," so bad that we are astonished at your asking the question—"Lizzie," not bad, but the ink is so pale, and the pen so indifferent, we could scarcely read your letter—"Santa Hilda," ladylike, but a little too careless.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED.—

A. X. S. is responded to by—"Mary," who thinks he would suit her. She is twenty-one, 5 ft. 2 in. in height, and good looking.

O. S. by—"Violet Z. X.," twenty-three, 5 ft. 5 in., dark, religious, and has a small income and a loving heart; and—"Nelly," the widow of a naval officer, twenty-six, no children, a comfortable home, a little money, and a loving heart to offer to a sensible man, who would be content with the smiles of a true woman, not Blue Beard like, flirting after every gay butterfly he may chance to see.

ALBERT STEELE by—"Constance Louise," seventeen, tall and commanding figure, fair, blue eyes, amiable disposition, and fond of home; and—"Little Kettle," seventeen, 5 ft. 2 in., very pretty, blue eyes, an abundance of black wavy hair, and 100*l.* to bestow on "Albert Steele."

ELIZA by—"Victor," twenty-one, 5 ft. 9 in. in height, dark, black eyes and hair, and good looking, a cashier, with an income of 350*l.*—"Augustus," twenty, 5 ft. 8 in. in height, hazel eyes, dark, curly hair, moustache, and an income of about 600*l.* Both are good tempered, and exceedingly fond of home; and—"Harry" and "Alfred," respectively twenty-one, and nineteen. "Harry" is tall and dark. "Alfred," middle height, fair, blue eyes, and of a loving disposition. Both belong to highly respectable families.

ELIZABETH by—"W. H. Horner," twenty-two, tall, fair, good looking, and good tempered—"Fred," twenty-one, fair, light hair, dark eyes, and in receipt of 100*l.* per annum, with a prospect of shortly commencing business; and—"E. B. G.," twenty-two, 5 ft. 9 in. in height, fair, and good tempered.

AMY FLORE by—"Good Wishers," twenty-seven, 5 ft. 10 in. in height, with whiskers and moustache, good looking, gentlemanly, good figure, very good tempered, and in a good position.

LOVING EMILY by—"A. W. J.," twenty-seven, 5 ft. 8 in. in height, and considered a good fellow amongst his friends. "A. W. J.'s" wife could move in the best society. He has travelled on the continent, in India, Australia, and South America; is a good musician.

GEORGINA by—"William," twenty-three, and 5 ft. 9 in. in height—"Robt. C.," twenty-four, 5 ft. 7 in. in height, dark, fond of literary pursuits and home, and well to do in worldly goods; and—"Hughes," who prefaces his letter with quotations from the Greek, Latin, Spanish, French, and German languages. "Hughes" is a member of the Church of England, of cheerful spirit, amiable disposition, a good musician and linguist, and fond of dancing as a Parisian. Let us add that "Hughes" is a kind of French "Admirable Critchton," for he can also keep a sword as an officer, and a pen as a writer. Then he adds, with the true *amateur patricien*, "but above all, I am a Frenchman, and very fond to have an English lady for a wife."

COMINGS by—"W. C.," forty, and a bachelor; and—"Apollo," a widower, with one fine boy seven years old. "Apollo," is thirty-six, 5 ft. 6 in., dark hair and eyes, good looking, a good musician and vocalist, and in a good situation at 100*l.* a year.

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